VIDEO GAMES™

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No. 11

Summer Fun!

Over 20 Pages of Reviews & Playing Tips for the Season's HOTTEST Arcade Games and Home Carts

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Making a Play for the Newest Hand-Helds and Table-Tops

Action-Packed Computer Section: The Latest Computer Game Reviews and the TI 99/4A

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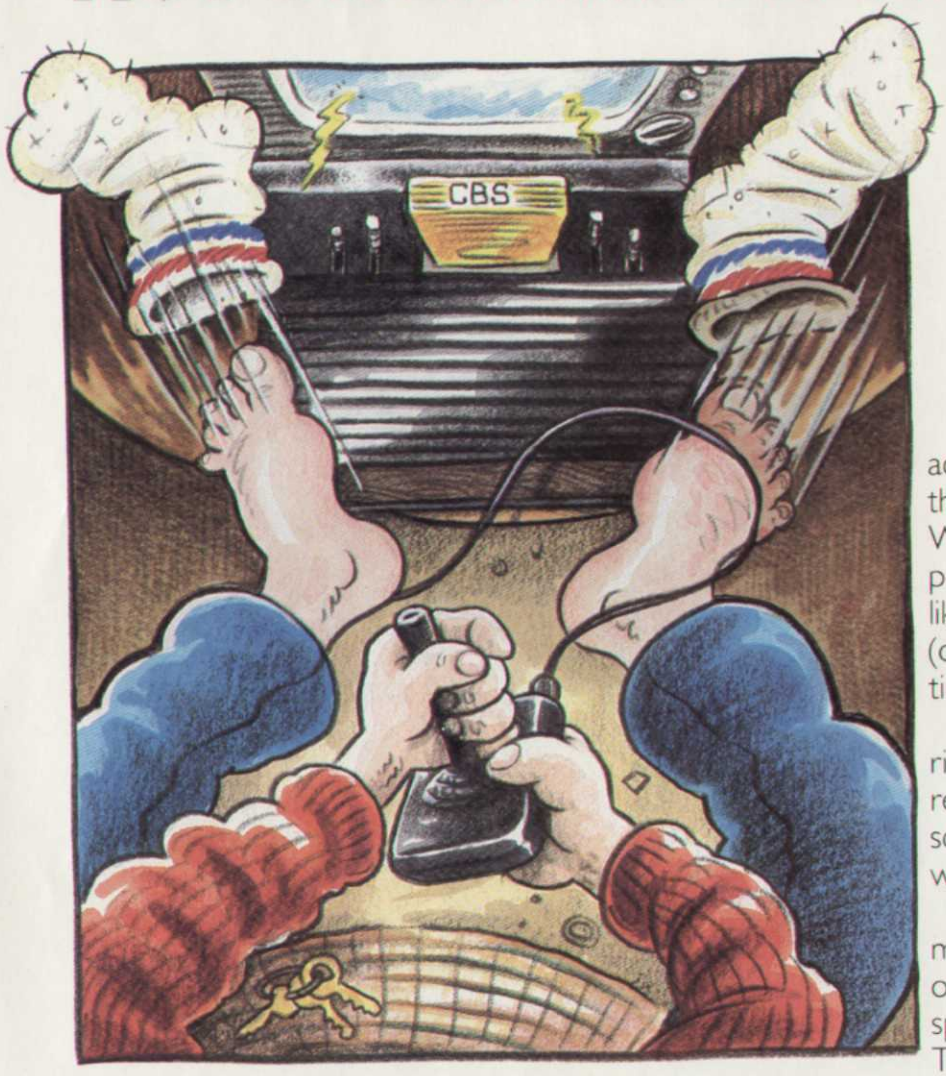

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VIDEO GAMES

Volume 1, Number 11 August 1983

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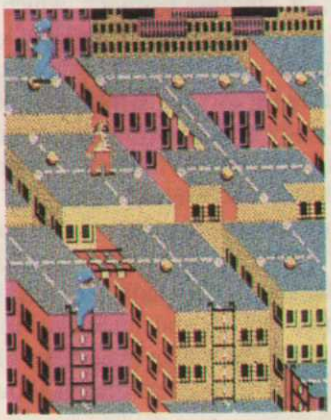

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Cover illustration by Ron Walotsky

HYPERSPACE

Here we are in the middle of summer and while the weather outside may be heating up, indoors the action is just as hot. Home game systems and personal computers are jockeying for position and superiority at a time when consumers must be wondering *not* whether the glut of new products will ever subside, but rather if we'll ever get to a point of some normalcy.

Price rebates, sales and other special offers aside, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between what might be a great bargain or some product which is quietly being phased out. This confusion can't be helping the game system area where newer developments are happening almost daily. Even similar activities surrounding the personal computer push, must ultimately result in some consumer dissatisfaction. After all, should you wait an extra week and buy the 'newest' model, or extend your decision-making for seven more days and purchase the 'improved, updated' version? Unfortunately, the dilemma isn't going to be resolved in the coming months.

The only saving grace is that we'll all benefit from what is scheduled to be released. The game systems will become more sophisticated and powerful, offering the ability to expand into computer applications with the flick of a switch. As for game playing, we are already seeing a renewed emphasis on better graphics and dimensionalized action which brings stronger storylines and greater involvement beyond just manuevering a joystick or fire button.

Regarding the arcade scene, advances are no less exciting with the advent of videodisc games as the coming season's hope for bringing players back in larger numbers to partake a new experience. Even what might now be considered *conventional* video is undergoing a subtle metamorphosis as the summer serves a transitional need in product developments and refinements.

In an effort to keep you current regarding the events as they're happening, VIDEO GAMES has pulled together close-up looks at the most recent coin-op games beginning on page 44. In addition, if you've been wondering how to best tackle some of the newest arcade games, check out page 33 and an overview of five winners along with strategies and tips on how to master them.

For action indoors, when the clouds may be out or you need a break to recover from a bit of sun burn, we've compiled the latest home carts and computer games (beginning on page 54) as VG unveils yet another new column, "Computer Corner," which will appear regularly in future issues. And to complete the coverage of games in all formats, shapes and sizes, "Game Efforts" (page 70) brings you an array of hand-helds and table-top models easy enough to take to the beach.

Already one of the summer's hits, "War Games" has sizzled on the silver screen and we'll take you behind the scenes (page 20) to show you how it was done and why the scenario of the film is so chillingly realistic. Speaking of the movie business, want to know what 20th Century Fox Video Games has in store, turn to page 24 and read VG's interview with Frank O'Connell who is heading up this division.

There's all this and much more in this issue dedicated to summer fun. So pull up a comfortable chair or lay out the beach blanket and discover what all the video game excitement is about. *Editor*

VIDEO GAMES

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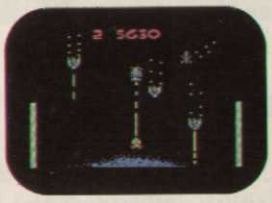
Mostly sunny, highs in the upper 9000's.



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Sizzle, krackle, ktczzzz...

Now the heat's on. Your planet's heat shield glows redder and redder with each Deltoid you miss.

Kponk. Kchungggg. Kblammm.

If you can't get to the orbital platform to battle with the Deltoid armada and secure more defenderships, say goodbye planet.

The Deltoid fireworks will be too much for the defense shields, and the planet will explode into another solar super nova.

If all this sounds like fun in the sun to you, you're right.

That is, of course, unless you're just a fair player.

Then expect a few laser showers followed by a severe warming trend.

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(See package for details.)

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Solar Storm

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Double Speak

Going Once . . .

Having just purchased the April issue of *VIDEO GAMES*, I noticed the keyboard/master component combination for the new Intellivision II component system. I have owned the original Intellivision component since April '81 and I was wondering if the original will ever have a keyboard component with it or do I sell this one and get the one with the keyboard?

Rick Adams
Richland, Wash.

There's no need to get rid of your system: The Entertainment Computer System works on the original as well as the updated Intellivision II. The Intellivision Computer Adaptor, the key component in the ECS, has 2K RAM memory, and an additional 12K ROM memory, including built-in BASIC.—Ed.

All Hooked Up

I read that there would be a new Piggyback 2000 for the 2600 VCS on page 39 of the May 1983 issue of *VIDEO GAMES*. Please give me more information.

David Podjasek
Glen Ellyn, Ill.

You're in luck. Just check out our June '83 issue on "The Computerization of Video Games."—Ed.

Jockeying for Position

I was shocked to hear about Atari's latest attempts to induce wholesale distributors of video games not to sell any competing brands. I don't blame Parker Brothers for suing them. They shouldn't monopolize the industry and all they are doing is making many loyal Atari fans angry. Several months ago, I sold my Atari 2600 to buy a ColecoVision console and with the expansion module I've still been able to buy and enjoy great Atari games like Centipede, Ms. Pac-Man and others. I think Atari, being number one, has an obligation to its customers to put out a superior product and to please as many customers as possible with their products.

I wish Atari could make versions of their great games for the other major game systems like ColecoVision and Intellivision, instead of acting stuck-up with their arrogant attitude. With the new Coleco Super Game module coming out soon, Atari could design versions of their games for that system and they could have some of the best home arcade translations yet, instead of being left behind in the dust. They could continue to be at the forefront of popularity, and they'd also be making more money. What ColecoVision or Intellivision owner hasn't dreamed of being able to play Atari's Battle Zone or Dig Dug on their systems? I hope Atari is considering this. If not, Coleco may one day rule, and more power to 'em! If anyone else feels the same way I do, please be sure to write to Atari and let them know. It's the only way it may one day happen.

Jeff Silva
Tacoma, Wash.

The plan that we've heard is that Atari will be manufacturing games for Intellivision in the future, so the jockeying for position over who will be number one isn't over.—Ed.

Popularity Contest

I own an Atari 5200 and in all of your latest issues all I read about is ColecoVision. Why? The 5200 has just as much, or more, going for it, and many more units have been sold than the ColecoVision unit. So the 5200 *must* be more popular. And Atari plans carts this summer that will make ColecoVision owners drool. So let's hear more about the 5200! P.S. I enjoyed your segment on George Opperman in "The Fine Art of Video Games."

Nick Baime
Glendale, Wisc.

A Timely Concern

What kind of magazine are you running? I own a TI99/4A and would like to see something in your magazine about it. I thought it would be included in your February issue, but again I was wrong. Why don't you have anything on it? Also, on page 67 of *Easy Home Computer* (Feb.) you show Apple's "excellent" graphics. TI has graphics just as "excellent" as theirs.

Gregory Baerg
Miami, Fla.

We won't comment on the EHC *story, but take a look at page 96 of this issue and see if we haven't given the TI99/4A its due.—Ed.*

Homeward Bound

I have been interested in buying E.T. (for the Atari). The kids in school said you can never win at it. Is this true? Also, I love the new arcade hits Time Pilot, Front Line, and Joust. Could you tell me if these games are coming out as cartridges?

Chris Parker
Tustin, Texas

Check VG*'s E.T. game review in Softspot (March '83). We have no news on Front Line but Time Pilot will be available soon for ColecoVision, and Atari is gearing up Joust for the 5200.—Ed.* ▲

NEW FROM ATARI®
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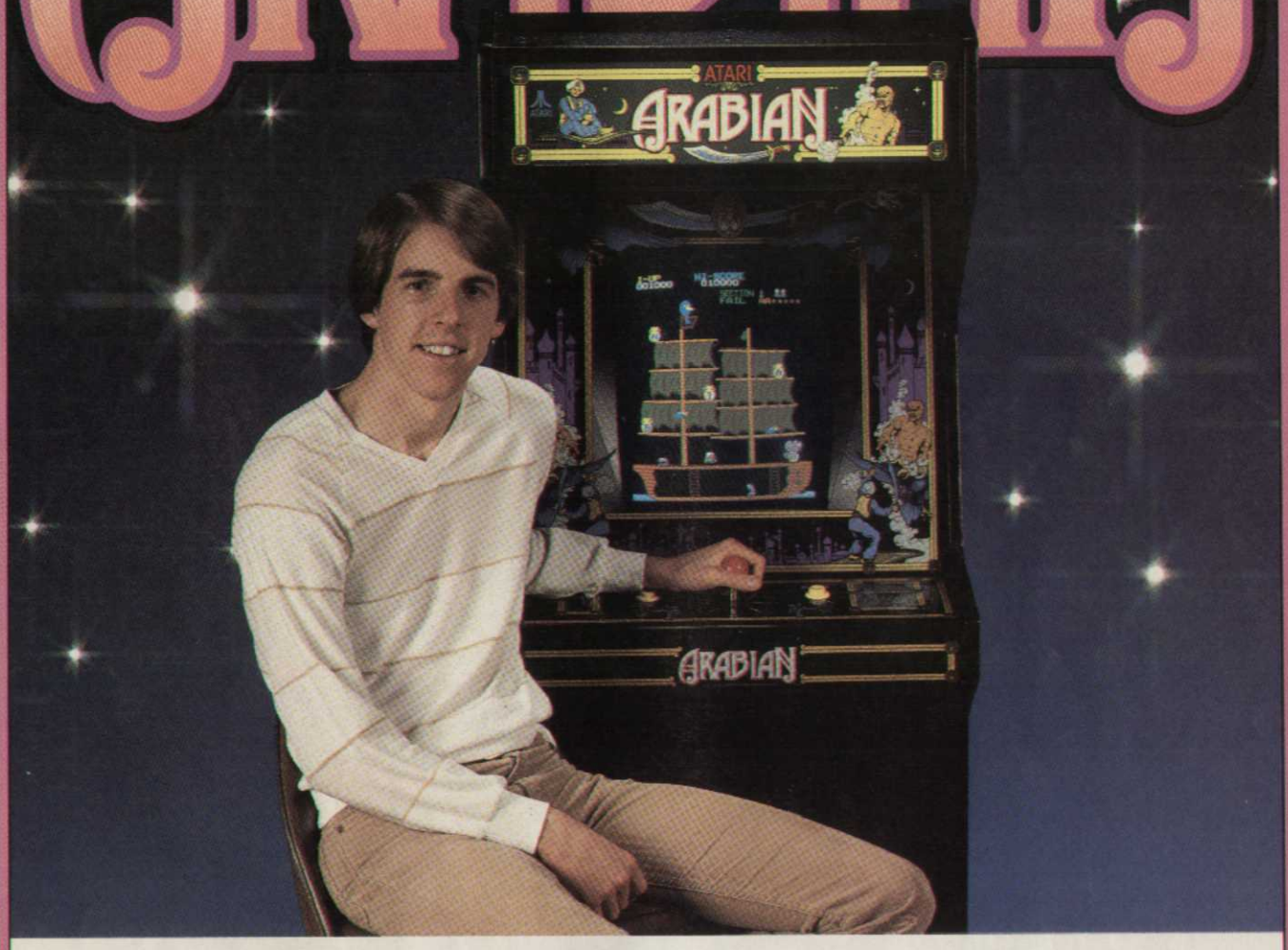
ARABIAN™*



"I'm a hard sell, but this new ATARI® game is so hot I'm going for another record."

"My name is Eric Ginner, and I've been a video game player for 5 years. I hold the current world's record for Millipede™ and Liberator™. What I'm trying to say is that I don't play just any game, but new ARABIAN™* from Atari has really got me going! I like it, and so will you.

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Eric Ginner—World Records

Millipede	(current)	1,720,392
Liberator	(current)	4,057,950
Dig Dug[2]	(May 1982)	1,140,000
Robotron[3]	(August 1982)	112,000,000
Moon Patrol[4]	(November 1982)	740,070
Popeye[5]	(April 1983)	313,660

Get into the action. Play through the story of a young Arabian "knight" who must rescue his lovely princess. . . page by page. Take it from Eric Ginner, ARABIAN is record-breaking new video excitement.

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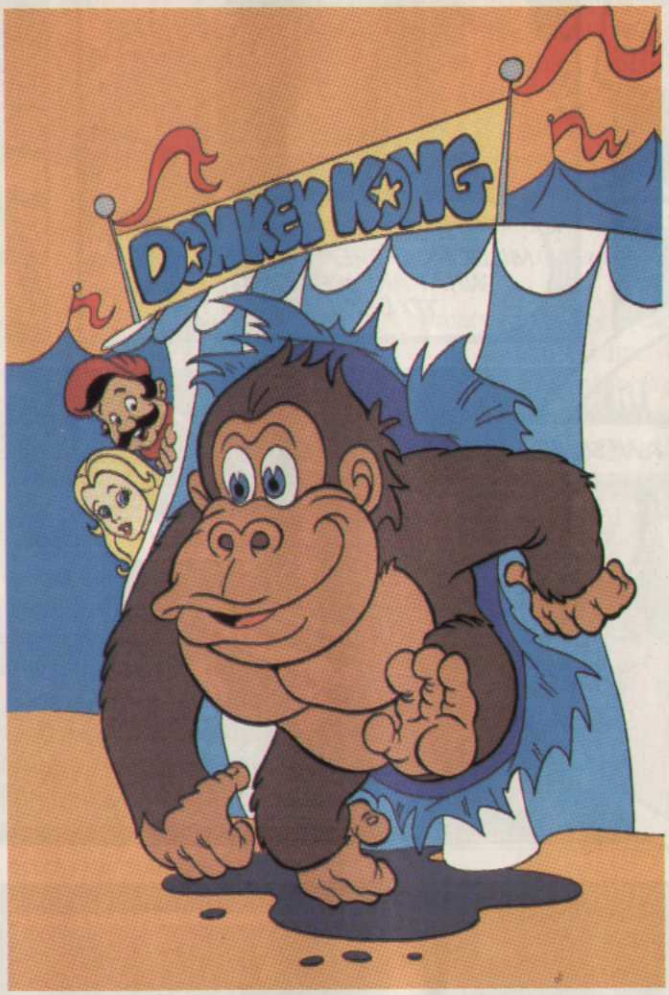
BLIPS

The Videoization of Saturday Morning Television

Q: What's the Fourth Screen in Donkey Kong?
A: The Television Screen!



Having witnessed the success of his colleague Pac-Man in making the move from the game screen to the television screen, Donkey Kong is ready to make his leap, bringing with him his young precocious son, Pauline and, of course, Mario. And, if that weren't enough to make the Saturday-morning jungle shake, he'll be sharing the limelight with characters from three other video games in a one-hour animated series.

In late April CBS announced plans for *Saturday Supercade*, which will air from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. EST, and feature the cartoon antics of Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Junior, Frogger, Q*bert and Pitfall Harry. The first three will have a weekly appearance on the series, while the other two will alternate weeks with each segment running 10½ minutes.

According to Joe Ruby, chairman of the board of Ruby-Spears Enterprises, the production company behind the series, the small animation studio first optioned Donkey Kong from Nintendo. "When the video game explosion started to come," he explains, "we began acquiring the rights to other games. It was a natural progression to put these games together into one super show, like the old comic books."

A major objective of the series, says the producer, was to incorporate the nature of the respective game plays into the show's action in "an effort to give each its own identity that the player can relate to.

"With Donkey Kong," Ruby reports, "the game is obviously about the rescue of Pauline. We changed the theme somewhat so that now Pauline and Mario are trying to get Kong back into the circus. He is not hostile to either of them; we want all our characters to be likeable. Kong is just trying to go out into the big world while Mario and Pauline, his ex-trainers, are trying to bring him back."

Meanwhile, Junior has made a trip from Africa and is searching the country for his dad. On his travels he picks up a troubled youngster and the two set out together. Along the way they find others with problems. "The chase is just a springboard to get into other stories," explains Ruby. "In this case, they get into comical adventures."

On the other hand, Ruby and his associates had to come up with original ideas for the other games, particularly Frogger and Q*bert. For the croaking road-crosser, the studio devised an entire world of journalistic intrigue. Deep in Foggybottom Swamp, Frogger is an investigative reporter for the *Gazette*, crossing the river and road to get into the humans' world and solve its mysteries. The swamp is inhabited by an entire cast of characters, including Fanny Frog, "that Cosmopolitan" type of frog; Shellshock, the turtle photographer (who has a darkroom in his shell) and editor Tex Toadwalker.

Elsewhere, at Q*Bert High to be exact, there's a rivalry brewing between two school cliques. One is led by Q*Tee, Q*Val and Q*Ball, while the other is headed by Coily the Snake. "We wanted to give them all personalities where they can interact, so we made them teenagers," Ruby says. "We're doing high school stories where they compete with one another in a sense." A kind of *Fast Times at Q*Bert High*, perhaps?

The final entry, Pitfall, stars the only character adapted from the home video market. The Activision game has been transformed into a comedy with the heroic Harry helping people to find missing

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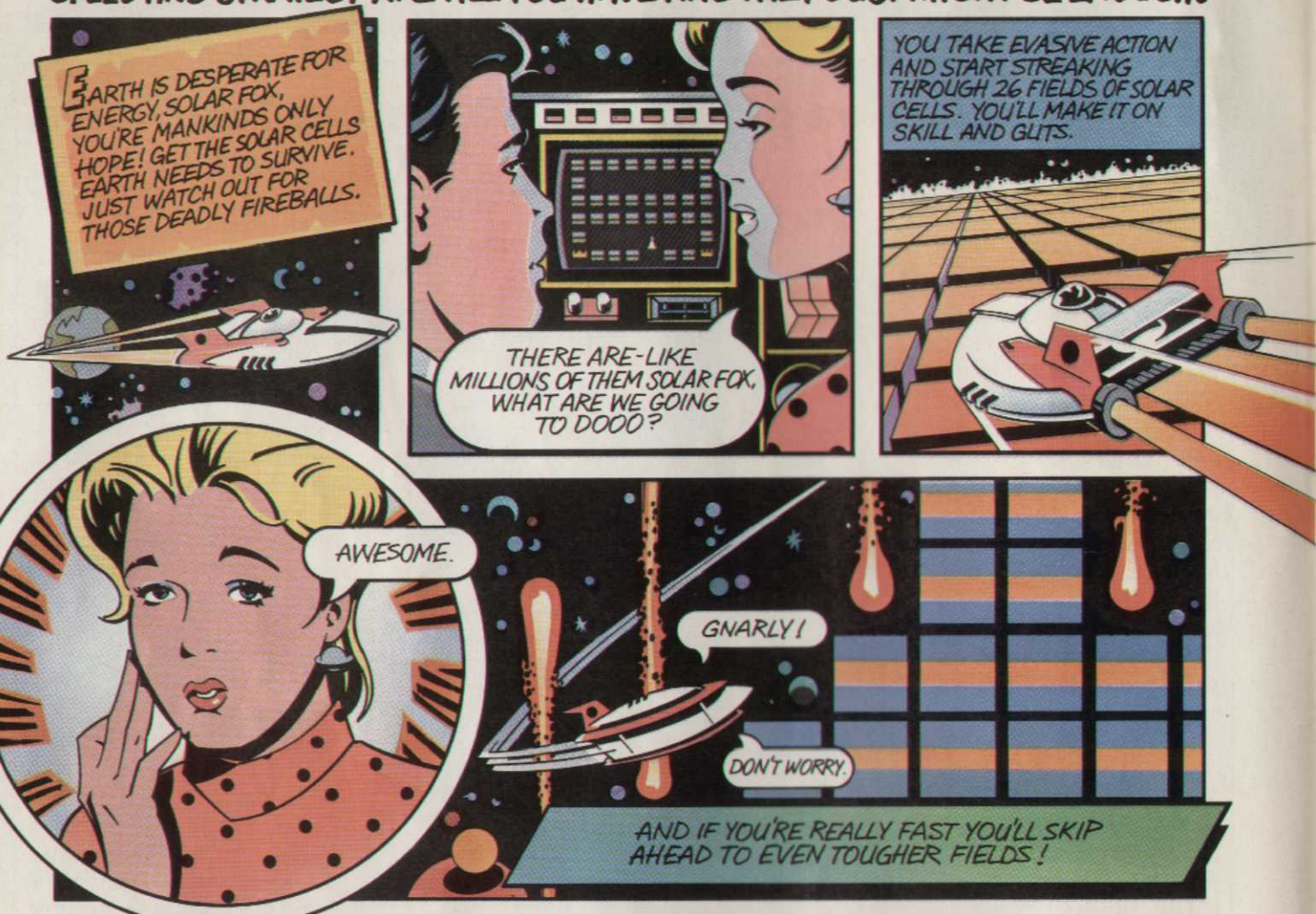

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treasure with the questionable aid of 12-year-old niece Rhonda. Joining them is the cowardly kultz, Quickclaw the mountain lion.

Ruby-Spears is continuing its search for home and arcade games that lend themselves to the animated field. One overriding concern, says Ruby, is for a wide appeal. "We try and get the type of arcade or home game that appeals to both boys and girls. There are many that are too hard-edged, such as Zaxxon, which wouldn't appeal to both sexes." Regardless of the story, Ruby believes the key to success on the highly-competitive Saturday morning circuit is strong characters the audience can identify with and be willing to tune in to week after week, season after season. Rather than hook into a fad, like disco, Ruby warns, an ongoing appeal must be found. "Obviously, if there's a hot game out," he says, "someone will try and get it on the air. I think it will level out eventually, like all things have a tendency to do."

A primary advantage of the *Supercade* format is that it allows for a rotation of shows and can adapt to something new or especially popular. If successful, Ruby expects to be able to add to the show's lineup after the first year.

Ruby-Spears is also looking to license its characters to game manufacturers (see May *VG*). Already, its barbarian hero, Thundarr, has been optioned and Ruby hopes for others to follow. Thundarr, by the way, has found new success on NBC after failing on ABC two years ago.

Now what of the diminuitive pellet-gobbler who started the trend on Saturday mornings? His show has been so successful that ABC has spun-off the show to its own half-hour slot beginning at 9:30 a.m. EST, right after *Supercade* ends.

—Richard Goodwin

Throwing in the Towel

Can you bear to leave your favorite video game behind when you hit the beach this summer? Well, now you can keep the memory close at hand while you're sunning yourself. Franco Manufacturing of New York is manufacturing 30″ x 58″ beach towels featuring five of the most popular games of all times. So far the lineup includes Turbo, Frogger, Zaxxon and Tron, all printed on white terry with suggested prices of $6. Also available is Donkey Kong, printed on a 32″ x 60″ white terry, which will sell for $7.

These colorful towels are available now at Jamesway, Caldor, Richway, Jeffersons, Gold Circle, Venture and many other discount chains across the country.

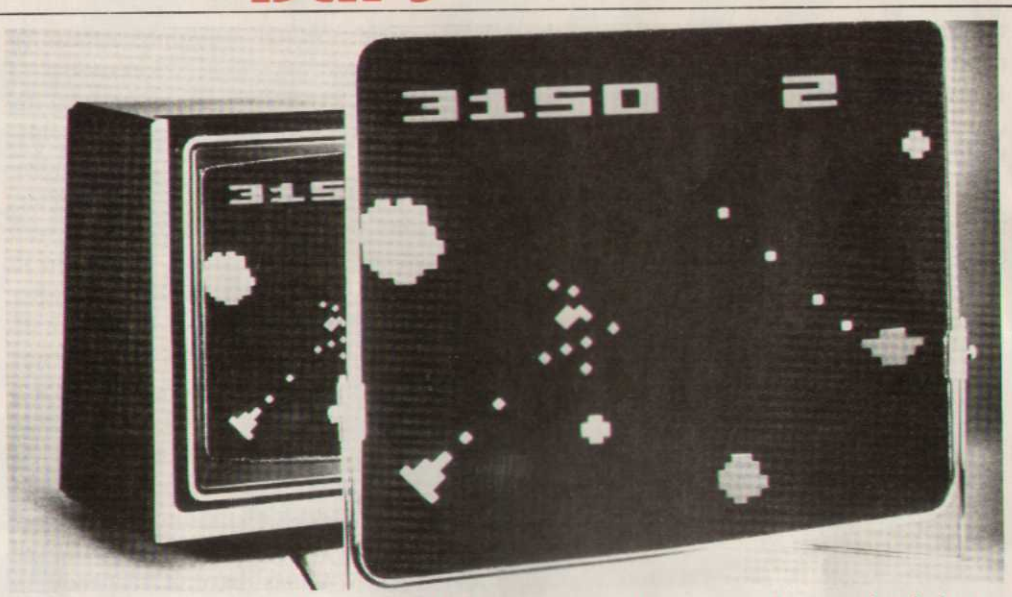
—Perry Greenberg

Crunch-a-Kong

It's Saturday morning and, naturally, you're watching *Supercade* on TV. Now, what could be better than to top off the show with a big bowl of Donkey Kong cereal? Ralston Purina Co. is delivering a presweetened, corn-based cereal shaped like the barrels in the ever-popular Nintendo video game. As is the case with the transition from game to TV, Donkey Kong's arrival to breakfast cereal shelves was preceded by Pac-Man's arrival from General Mills. According to *Advertising Age*, the Donkey Kong cereal, which was tested in selected markets earlier this year, is "described as tasting similar to Quaker's Cap'n Crunch."

—Melinda Glass

The Big Show



The success of Stern's Mazer Blazer in the arcades may give gamers big ideas for their home game systems as well. After all, the experiences of confronting video images on a large 30-inch screen is a sight to behold. According to International Marketing Services' vice-president of sales, Robert Stevenson, the Beamscope II, which creates Mazer Blazer's unique oversized images, is also available for use with home television screens as well.

Basically the Beamscope II (from $59.95 to $299.00, depending on which of four sizes you buy) is a rectangular magnifying lense, secured in a metal frame, which can be easily attached to the front of most television sets. Capable of increasing the size of objects up to four times (without the expense of a projection unit), depending upon how far it's placed from the screen, it doesn't take much imagination to picture the results for a favorite home cart. The larger screen also lets you sit comfortably across the room, rather than up close to see the action, which is something you may be doing more of with all the advanced new joysticks hitting the market.

Even if large-screen video games don't make their way into your home, you won't be able to miss them in the game rooms. Stevenson says Beamscope will be used in more arcade machines in the future, so be on the look out for large scale visual effects.

—Michael Fine

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Good As Gold

Though his quest was nearly over, Steven Bell was not smiling. True, he had uncovered a host of hidden clues, solved obscure riddles and travelled thousands of miles to compete in Earthworld, the first of Atari's Swordquest adventure -game contests. And, true, the treasure, a weighty, solid gold medallion inlaid with diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires and other precious gems, valued at around $30,000 was his. All he had to do now was see it home from California to Michigan.

"So Steve, how *are* you going to get it home? I mean, you don't have a bodyguard do you?" asked one intrepid reporter.

"No one will know I have it," Bell replied uneasily.

"*Sure* they will. Look, you're not going to check it with your baggage, right? So you carry it. You go through the metal detector and, bing!, the bell goes off and you have to drag out this enormous talisman, or whatever it is, in front of hundreds of people. The security guard will say—loudly—'Now what is *this!?*' Oh, they'll know you have it alright."

Bell, moustached, long-haired, young and thin, seemed unsure whether his questioner was joking or not.

"Well, never mind the airport," the trouble-maker went on. "What are you going to do with this medal when you do get it home?"

"Sell it, I guess."

"To whom? Who's in the market, do you think, for a $30,000, heavy, golden zodiac medallion?"

The caterers had arrived with the victory feast, but Bell was looking gloomier by the moment.

"Look, I'm just kidding around," the man relented. "You can always use it as collateral for a loan, or you can melt it down, or you can just put it on the mantle. Wait, forget the mantle—you're going to have to pay about $4,000 taxes on it, so you better melt it. Okay, so what are you going to do with the money?"

"No plans yet," Bell replied. "I didn't really expect to win. . . Maybe I'll get a car. I've never had one."

Bell, 20, lives near Detroit. He has been out of work for a year. So has his father. Last August, he saw an ad for the Atari Swordquest contests and began to play, using the dictionary to look up words such as "talisman," and to become more familiar with the zodiac signs used in the game. His parents, he says, didn't take much note of this. At first, they didn't believe he had won a trip to the finals at Atari headquarters in Sunnyvale. The medallion, or whatever cash they can get for it, might come in handy.

The Earthworld finals were held in a large room containing seven television sets and VCS units, one for each finalist, arranged in a circle around a large, pentangle-shaped zodiac design on the floor. Judges sat behind each contestant, keeping track of their progress through 11 levels of play during a preset 90-minute time limit. Bell reached the 11th level in only 46 minutes.

The Swordquest contest hinges on four Atari adventure video games: Earthworld, Fireworld, Airworld and Waterworld. The carts essentially require bringing the right objects to the right rooms with clues found in accompanying comic books, supposedly helping in the decision process. In addition, the comic books themselves contain word-clues, hidden in the illustrations. Those word-clues determine who qualifies for the finals of each game. (The correct Earthworld clues were IN, QUEST, TALISMAN, FOUND, and TOWER. Out of 5,000 entrants, only Steven Bell and seven others discovered the five correct clues.)

Finals for the other games will be held at approximately three-month intervals, with each winner getting a prize like Bell's. The four winners will then compete for the grand prize: a very heavy, jewel-encrusted sword valued at around $50,000.

"So, Steven, I guess you'll be calling your parents soon to tell them the good news?"

"No."

"You're not going to call them?"

"Oh, I'll call them. But I'm going to tell them I lost. Then I'll just show them the medal when I get home—sort of surprise them."

—Mark Hazard Osmun

Vocal Arrangements

Soon you'll be able to beat the games on your Atari 2600 or 5200 with your hands tied behind your back, literally. Atari has teamed up with the Milton Bradley Co., who will manufacture the first voice synthesis and voice recognition attachment for home video systems. The accompanying headset and microphone lets you direct the video game action with your voice. In Baseball (an Atari cartridge to be adapted to this system), you'll be able to tell a fielder to throw the ball to first base, for example, and he'll do just that. (Billy Martin should have such cooperation). Space games may require you to give commands such as "hyperspace" to make maneuvers.

Atari isn't saying much about the games being developed for its voice peripheral (on sale around November), but Milton Bradley will help manufacture 18 Atari carts over three years, with most of them utilizing voice capabilities.

The added excitement of the voice module, to sell for less than $100, should make Atari owners very happy. A little hoarse maybe, but very happy.

—Michael Fine

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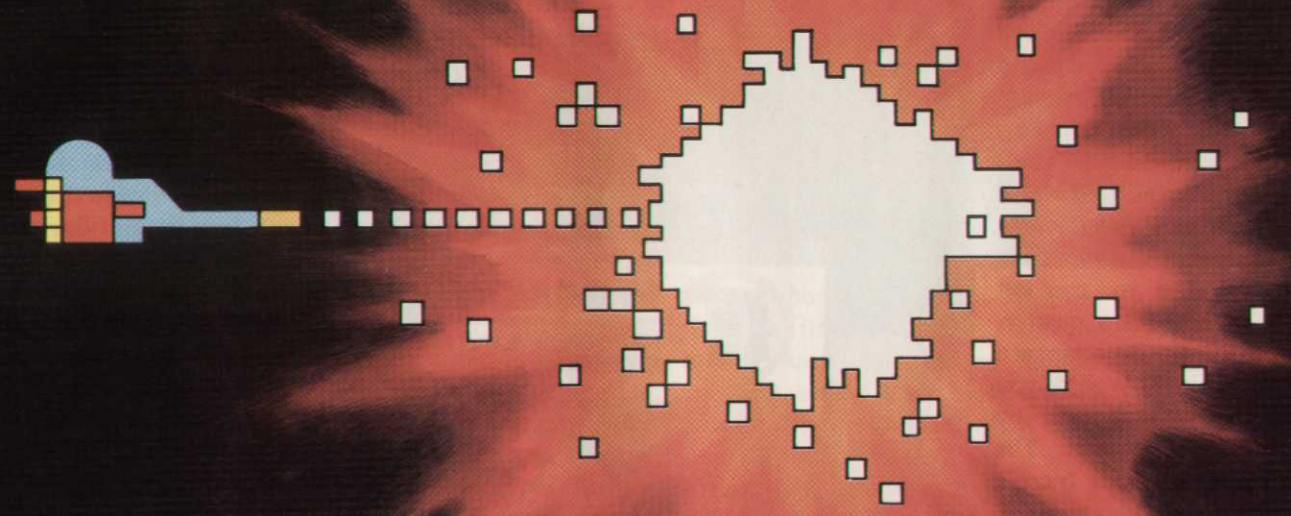

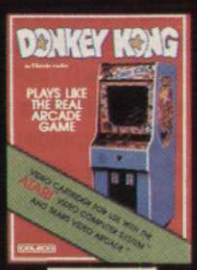

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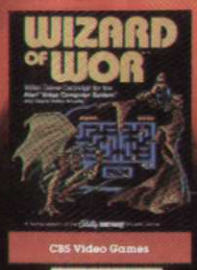

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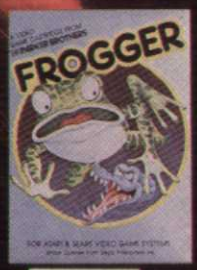

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Kicking the Habit

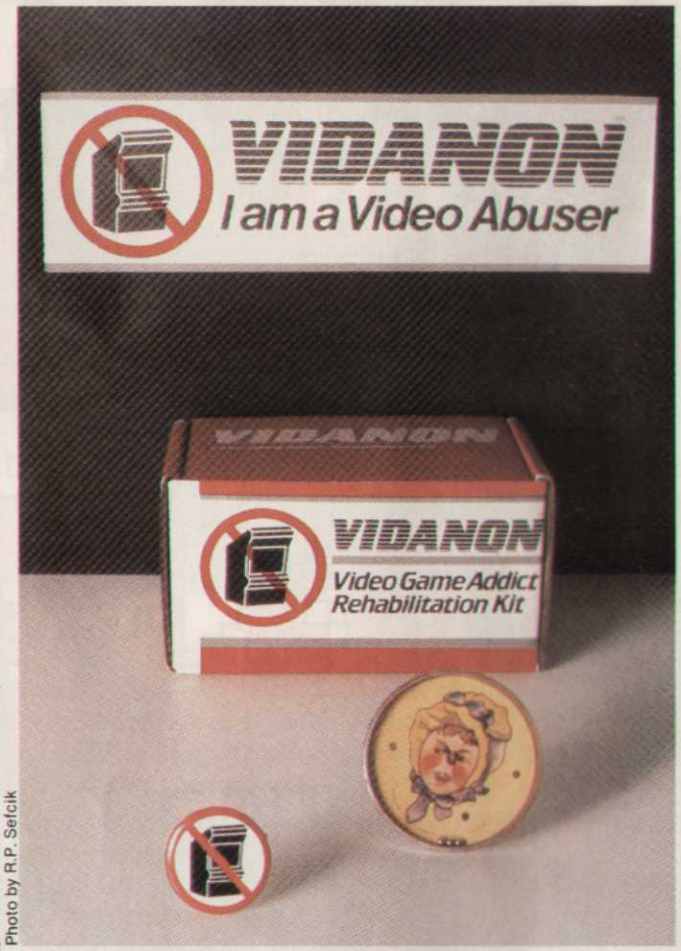


Photo by R.P. Sefcik

Are you borrowing from friends, relatives, or total strangers to support your video game habit? Do you need to play a game or two in the morning to feel "right?" Do you find yourself planning your day around what video games you're going to play? If you can't play your favorite game, do you get nervous and irritable? Have you ever lost track of how many quarters you've spent on a machine at a single sitting? Would you rather play Robotron by yourself than watch *The A-Team* at your best friend's house?

If you answered yes to two or more of the above questions, you might be suffering from the newest cultural plague: video game addiction. But help, fear not, is on the way with a new kit from VIDANON (P.O. Box 1192, Fair Oaks, Calif. 95628) designed to rehabilitate the afflicted video gamer. As the promotional literature accompanying the kit suggests, "a person... should be in touch with reality and not in a fantasy world created by computer chips."

The kit contains everything a video game fiend needs to kick the insidious habit. First, there's the "methavid" (no-bland, no-cost methadone treatment) that is a manually-operated generic video game (actually it's a puzzle where the idea is to guide three tiny steel balls into the eyes and mouth of a picture of a woman). For crisis situations, a VIDANON emergency attack modification control unit (Chinese finger puzzle) is included, obviously to render the abuser's index finger useless for pushing buttons. Then there's the valuable vid-a-slug official VIDANON currency (a wooden nickel).

Once the player is under treatment, the VIDANON external international recognition device (a button with an anti-video game insignia) lets others know that he or she is a video game abuser, and should not be allowed in arcades or near video machines, lest they harm themselves by missing homework or an important TV show. The internal recognition device (a membership card) contains the video addict distress line. Should the former video abuser feel the urge to waste a quarter on a game, one of the telephone operators will talk them out of giving in, and describe all the things they could be spending money on (like the new Superman movie, punk-rock records, or a Snickers bar).

Once cured, the former addict can proudly place the VIDANON vehicle enhancer (bumper sticker) on his automobile, van, truck, or mobile home and show the world that he's beaten the machines, once and for all. Now they're healthy, happy consumers whose quarters will be spent in constructive ways, such as buying a PetRock, perhaps?

—John Holmstrom

Quick Change Artist

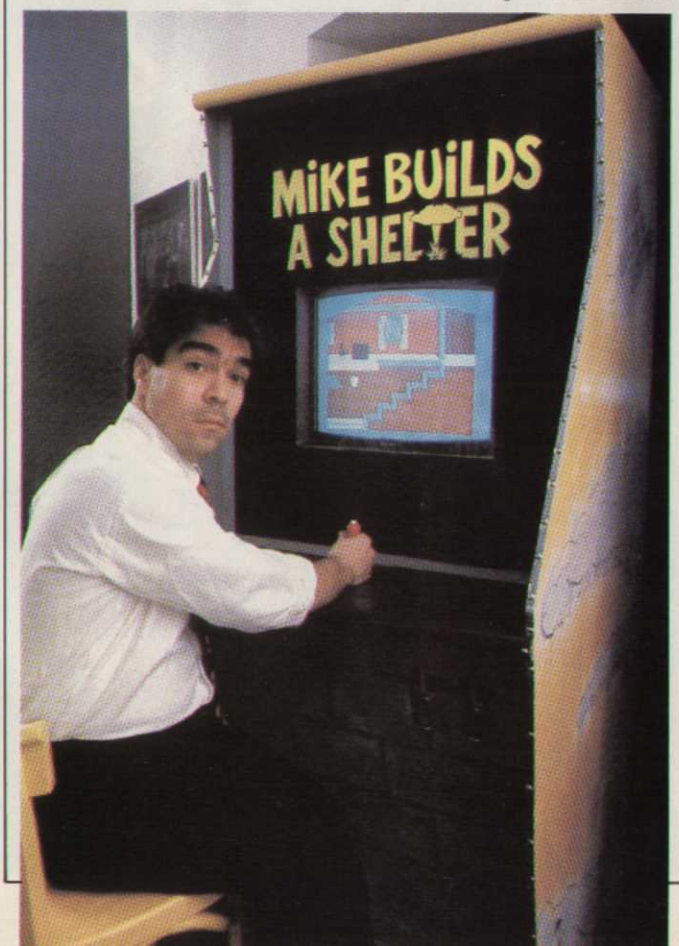
How do you go from River Raid to Ms. Pac-Man without leaving the sofa? Well, you don't have to be a Houdini. All you need is the RomScanner from MarJac. An electronic storage and retrieval system, it's designed for use with the Atari 2600 and allows players random access of up to 10 different home carts. Just plug your games into the RomScanner sockets, where they will then be linked directly into the VCS. The RomScanner ($79), automatically resets the system and loads the new game with the mere push of a button. An indicator light shows when the unit is on and which game is being selected. It weighs one pound and fits underneath the game console attaching to it via velcro pads. For more information write to MarJac Technology, Inc., 10418 North Sunflower, Mequon, Wis. 53902. *—L.M.*

Give Me Shelter

Mike Builds A Shelter presents what seems to be a simple challenge. When warning sirens signal an attack, visible first through the living room window and moments later on the tiny, on-screen TV, the squat, sprite Mike dives into his basement and has three minutes of play time to climb five stairs, grab and stack three bricks to close off his rec-room counter, jump up and down to put out a small fire, and hide in his newly-built, government-approved crawl space before the BANG! and flashing monitor bring an end to his world. Mike is rather slow; his stair-climbing progress is agonizing. If he succeeds, he survives the first blast; if he doesn't, his head falls like a bouncing ball to the tune of "We'll Meet Again (Don't Know Where, Don't Know When)" from Stanley Kubrick's black comedy classic, *Dr. Strangelove*. Even if Mike takes cover, a second explosion—we assume it's nuclear—finishes him off.

What manner of coin-op game is this? A satirical one. Mike Builds A Shelter is certainly the first arcade-style video game to be found at Castelli Graphics, the prestigious Manhattan art gallery where conceptualist and comic performance artist Michael Smith installed two rooms of his character, Mike's basement, complete with snack-bar fallout shelter designed to Federal specifications. Mike Builds A Shelter, a copyrighted prototype, further represents the frustration, if not sheer futility, of an average homeowner learning to love the bomb.

The arcade game box sat outside the two rooms filled with Mike's personal effects



(and such bomb shelter necessities as tinned crackers, canned water and Vienna sausages), amidst a series of drawings (they resemble Civil Defense posters) that explain "Mike had been reading about spills, thrills and increased military spending for some time. He thought perhaps he should prepare for when the 'Big One' drops." The full-scale construction was at Castelli for two months (through June 30), while Smith's previous installation, the living room set of his cable-TV spoof, *It Starts at Home,* which opened at the Whitney Museum in 1982, toured art centers in Albequerque, Indianapolis and Pittsburgh.

"A video game seemed like something Mike would have," says Smith, a 32 year old who's thought long and funny about his alter ego. "Then, I liked the coin-op idea. Maybe we'll make a couple of quarters." After all, it's hard to sell an entire room to an art collector. Game play could be watched on the real TV monitor sitting inside the rec room; however, everyone who visited the Castelli gallery took a turn at the joystick, urging Mike up the stairs, groaning when he stumbled and fell, grinning in helpless dismay when Mike succumbed to the fireball and his house became rubble.

Smith devised Mike Builds A Shelter, but it was programmed by 18-year-old Reza Keshavarc, following animation by 29-year-old Dov Jacobson, in five weeks of part-time work. Keshavarc, a high school senior who considers computer programming his hobby, and Jacobson, whose previous animation has been seen in film festivals, met while employed by Time/Life Inc.'s new computer/cable division, and created the game in BASIC on a Commodore system with 64K.

"If this had been a commercial project, it would have taken three or four guys four or five months to really polish this game," Keshavarc claims. "We could have done a few more things, detail-wise, if we'd had a little more time." But Mike Builds A Shelter is detailed enough and works just fine, which is more than one can say of the U.S. government's plans for protecting your basement against radioactivity after a nuclear attack. A few bricks do not a fallout shelter make. You've got to wonder, after a while, just what game Civil Defense is playing. —*Howard Mandel*

VIDEO GAMES FIRST ANNUAL PLAYERS' CHOICE AWARDS

VIDEO GAMES is pleased to announce the First Annual Players' Choice Awards where you, the player, have the opportunity to vote for your favorite arcade and home games. Whether you've been hooked on Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, Zaxxon or Pole Position, now's your chance to support your personal pick and see it hit the top of the charts. Vote as often as you want and tell your friends. Results and awards will follow in the December issue of *VG*. Deadline for voting is August 30th.

ARCADE GAMES	HOME CARTRIDGES
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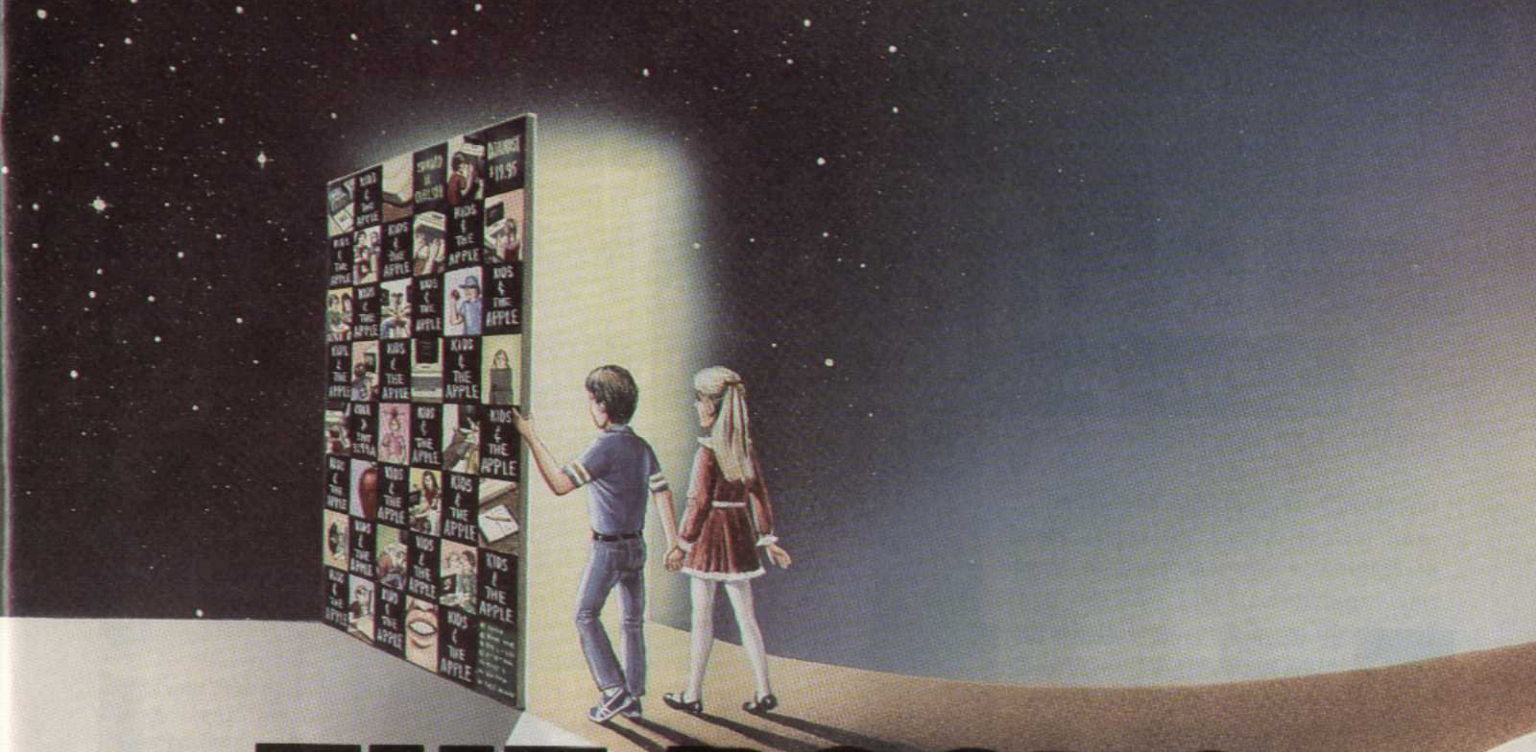
Use the handy form on this page to get your votes counted, or send in your votes on any blank piece of paper to Players' Choice Awards, c/o *VIDEO GAMES*, 350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 6204, New York, N.Y. 10118.

Illustration by Dana Ventura



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Art Imitates Life

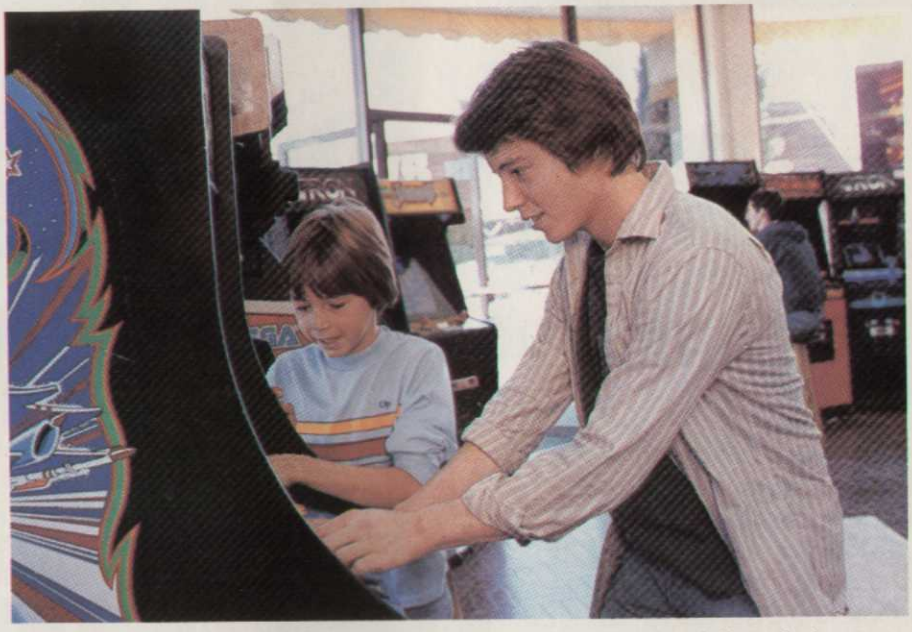
"War games" heats up the silver screen

By Beau Eurell

The opening credit scenes of "WAR GAMES" roles and it's easy to imagine that what is about to unfold is going to be special (something like 'Video Meets Fail -Safe'). Before you are two Air Force officers who have been assigned to NORAD's Defense Headquarters, located inside Cheyenne Mountain near Colorado Springs, Colorado. Both are racing to arrive on time for their watch shift on missile launch in the 'loop'. It may be business as usual but you just know that all is destined to not be right with the world for very long.

This adventure suspense film, although not based on an actual incident, is chillingly realistic. It's about a very creative student, David Lightman, who lives in Seattle, Washington. The part is superbly played by Matthew Broderick, currently starring on Broadway, and nominated for a Tony Award, for his performance in Neil Simon's new comedy, "Brighton Beach Memoirs." In this MGM/UA release, "WAR GAMES," Broderick portrays a high school student who just happens to be a video game and computer whiz kid. He utilizes his technical prowess throughout the film very effectively, thus keeping him one step ahead of the game.

One example of this expertise might be in the area of school grades. Unlike many teenagers facing failing marks and screaming parents who lapse into a total state of hysteria, this presents not the slightest problem for David. Having previously been sent to the vice-principal's office for minor infractions, David has managed to discover where they write the secret computer code word enabling a person to key into, or



David shows one of his younger friends (played by Howie Allen) his skills at playing arcade video games.

Confusion in the "Crystal Place" after computer-generated trajectories appear on the missile surveillance monitors.

David and Professor Falken discuss how to re-program Joshua to stop playing "War Games" before the computer discovers the code to actually launch the missiles on its own power and authority.

gain access to, the Seattle School System's Computer Link. This code word, and his home computer set-up, enables him to obtain any multiple of information about the school or a particular student. He utilizes this knowledge to tap into the 'back-door' of the education system and takes full advantage to upgrade his failing marks as well as those of a young lady named Jennifer, played by Ally Sheedy, who is his love interest in the film. While someone might not condone his activity, one must really applaud, as did the movie audience, David's incredible sense of ingenuity.

Being a video games fanatic, David also likes to keep current on the latest offerings whether they be arcade or home cartridge versions. Should he find a game that interests him, he does the necessary research before tapping into the company's computer network. This allows him to then try out the game and if he really enjoys it, to program it on his home system. Unfortunately, this is where David, shall we say, "over-accesses" himself starting him on an incredible journey and into a tremendous amount of trouble.

David, through some sort of technical foul-up, while searching for a particular company in Sunnyvale, California, accidently taps into NORAD's Defense Computer. The computer's technical name in the film is W.O.R.P. (War Operations Plan Response) but it's better known as 'Joshua' the name given it by its creator, Dr. Stephen Falken, played by Tony award winner, John Wood. David looks at the computer generated game menu and decides to play one entitled, "Thermo-Nuclear War". However, the problem is that David doesn't realize whom he is playing against nor that 'Joshua' is programmed to win by learning from its mistakes thereby, ultimately, winning the final scenario, Armageddon or World War III.

What follows are probably some of the best written and directed scenes to hit the silver screen in quite some time. The screenplay was written by Lawrence Lasker and Walter F. Parkes, while "WAR GAMES" was incredibly directed by John Badham, who is probably best known for his work on the hit movie, "Saturday Night Fever." Badham is also represented this summer with another feature, "Blue Thunder" which stars Roy Scheider.

Now, while the scenario may seem a bit far fetched or impossible for many of us to believe, how many of you are aware of the fact that from January, 1979 to June, 1980 some 147 nuclear alerts were registered at NORAD's headquarters? One such example would be the following alert, which was reported by journalists Rhoda Brown and Paul Matteucci in the September 1, 1981 issue of Inquiry Magazine. The story, as reported, made front-page headlines in newspapers all around the world. It went something like this:

"It was only a tiny beeping sound, but it chilled the men standing duty in the underground fortress that headquarters the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

"The beep came from a computer terminal that wanted to alert the watch officer of its ominous message: Hundreds of Soviet missiles were in the air, streaking towards the United States with their deadly payloads.

"Armageddon was eight minutes away.

"At twenty Strategic Air Command bases across the United States, hundreds of bomber crews scrambled to their B-52s. The technicians who operate nuclear missiles on the ground and in submarines went on alert. The Pacific Command's airborne command post—which would direct a retaliatory strike if the Russian missiles destroyed ground-based headquarters—took off. And by telephone, generals at various defense centers around the country held a 'missile display conference to decide what to do.

"They decided their computers were hallucinating again.

"The bomber crews went back to the barracks. The missile technicians sat down. The command plane landed.

"So ended World War III on June 3, 1980.

"Only casualties: wounded pride."

Okay, so you're still having difficulty believing that this could happen. In fact, you're probably not the only ones. Believe it or not, the screenwriters, Lasker and Parkes, who were in the middle of a long and tense writing session, also had their doubts. Lasker explained it this way, "We were pacing back and forth and saying, 'Is anyone going to believe this could happen to the United States' military? I turned on the CBS Evening News and Walter Cronkite launched into a story... 'for eight minutes yesterday, the United States went on a full-scale nuclear alert, believing that the Russians had launched a surprise missile attack... We were totally beside ourselves!"

For those of you who do not understand what a full-scale nuclear alert means, some explanation is in order since the Defense Department has a coding system which they use according to the degree of seriousness. Defcon 3 (Defense Condition) being the "least"

The simulated "War Games" computer, technically called WOPR (War Operation Plan Response), and nicknamed Joshua by its creator Professor Stephen Falken.

David answers Joshua's self-originated phone call to him and tells Joshua that he doesn't want to play this game anymore.

serious to Defcon 1 which is very, very serious and means we are preparing to launch our retaliatory missiles.

There's even more fuel to be added to the fires of believability. During 1979 and 1980, NORAD went to the second stage of readiness and called threat assessment conferences on more than one occasion. One was the June 3rd incident, while another occurred in November, 1979 when a computer war games tape was misindentified as the real thing. To this date, the Defense Department is still unable to explain how that happened. Computer generated false warnings continue to perplex the officials at NORAD. Luckily, the final stage of an alert, the "missile attack conference" has never been called although three "missile display conferences" have been. These conferences are called to determined the authenticity of the sensor pickups and to decide what course of action, if any, should be taken.

One of the points raised in this motion picture, which can be considered an important issue, is that of removing the launch control of the missiles out of the hands of the men in the 'loop' and placing the awesome and horrifying capability in the hands of computers.

I've referred to the 'loop' a few times prior to this and for those of you who have not seen the picture yet, or aren't familiar with the term, I'll try to explain. Each silo runs on a path or system runway and has its own launch control board which can only be ignited by the simultaneous turning of two keys by the missile launch officers present. The room is no larger than 12′ by 12′. These men are locked in these 'loops' for a given watch and their only function is to 'launch' the missiles should the need arise.

In "WAR GAMES", the second scene involves the two officers who were racing to get to their watch on time. Once they are locked in and start to check their monitor systems, a code comes in. The military complex starts its machinery up. The men unlock two separate code boxes to look up and authenticate the given code number. Once this has been done and they find out its the code for 'missile launch', the tension on screen permeates the entire movie theatre and audience.

These two men are professionals at what they do. They have been trained, rehearsed and lectured to so much that this 'launch' function should become second nature. In other words, they should be able to turn their launch keys together and, at the same time, there by launching our retaliatory missiles or our first strike capabilities. The television monitor in the 'loop' shows the engine rockets warming up and the liquid nitrogen vaporizing as it dispels itself from the engines.

The countdown begins but in this case, one of the officers decides that he wants to (make that *needs* to) authenticate the command by making phone contact with someone. The other officer keeps telling him that what he is doing goes against all proper procedure. As the seconds get closer to launch, the gung-ho officer pulls out his service revolver and points it at his partner. You can see the tremendous strain on both men's faces as they struggle with their own inner turmoil. Finally, the scene ends thereby leaving us to decide what happened. Did the officer who hesitated turn his key or did the other officer shoot him because he didn't turn his key.

Fortunately, this was only a simulation. The men in the 'Crystal Palace' decided to see if their launch officers would be capable of doing what they were trained to do. Walter F. Parkes, one of the screenwriters had the following to say about that procedure: "NORAD constantly tests these men for obedience to orders. There have been numerous reports of men being removed from the 'loop' for having failed to respond the way they were supposed to during these simulations. It's an awesome responsibility and it is one that I am glad I do not have. These men, in their own ways, are incredible."

This last scene sets up the following confrontation between Dr. John McKittrick, played by Dabney Coleman who has recently appeared in the motion pictures, "9 to 5", "On Golden Pond" and "Tootsie", and General Jack Beringer who is played so realistically by Barry Corbin. McKittrick is NORAD's Defense Department expert on the complex computer warning systems which they utilize and Beringer is NORAD's chief commanding officer. McKittrick wants the men taken out of the loop and the launch systems placed in the hands of computers, especially after the last test. Beringer, is a man while totally militaristic, believes that the responsibility would remain in the hands of trained men. His men.

During the course of a heated conference, McKittrick wins out. The men are taken out of the loop and relieved of

A view of the "dressed up" version of the control room at NORAD's headquarters, located inside Cheyenne Mt. in Colorado. Code Name: "The Crystal Palace."

the command thereby placing into 'Joshua's' control). However, at this point in time, David has begun his little game with 'Joshua' and no one at NORAD is even aware of it.

In fact, during the course of research into this movie, Lasker and Parkes toured the NORAD complex. It was here they met the real commander of NORAD's operations, Lieutenant General James V. Harringer, U.S.A.F. Hartinger has been the commander at NORAD since 1980 and while Lasker and Parkes were touring NORAD, Hartinger found out they were planning a movie and singles them out for a conversation.

Lasker remembers, "When Hartinger found out what the theme of the movie was—that in fact we were coming down on the side of human control for the launching of nuclear missiles, as opposed to turning things over to computers, he just fell in love with us. Hartinger said, 'Absolutely You know, I can't get these guys to understand that: They keep coming around from these big defense corporations and saying, 'Hell, we can do it for $375 million, but you've got to get humans out of the loop.' I don't want to get humans out of the loop!" Beringer's character, I feel, comes incredibly close to that philosophy. In fact, Parkes says that "there's a little bit of Hartinger in Beringer."

The exterior scenes of this movie were filmed in Seattle and the enormous NORAD defense complex exterior shots were photographed in the northern section of Washington State, where the terrain resembles Colorado's Rocky Mountains. Recreating the inside of NORAD, or as it is referred to, "The Crystal Palace," fell upon the shoulders of Lasker and Parkes, at least in the beginning. They tried for months and months to get on a VIP tour of the complex. However, they were met head-on with constant denials and stall tactics. NORAD is located in the hollowed-out core of Colorado's Cheyenne Mountain. Its essential mission is to maintain computerized scrutiny of aircraft, missiles or space satellites that might pose a threat to the United States and Canada. Their primary function, in other words, is to sound the first alarm in the event of an aerial attack against North America.

Lasker recalls some of the resistance they received while trying to get an inside look at the complex. "At first, they kept telling us there was no way to get inside NORAD, that they were not giving tours anymore. So we tried to set up our own tour, without success, and just kept bugging them."

They finally managed to get on a blue-ribbon civic leaders' tour of the facility through the help of Ducan Wilmore, an Air Froce official who was the Los Angeles-based movie and television liason officer. Wilmore later retired from military service and was hired as a technical advisor on "WAR GAMES," as well as having an important role as one of NORAD's officers in the 'Crystal Palace'. When they finally toured NORAD's facilitites, Lasker and Parkes both knew that their descriptions of the complex were amazingly close to real life.

Of course, the Defense Department must have been a little bit uneasy about actually letting the entire world know about its complex. Walter Parkes explains, "They were all with us for awhile. When describing the theme of the movie they liked it, but there is an honest-to-god controversy that this movie touches on, which is to what extent we should remove human control from the decision-making loop. The commander-in-chief at NORAD liked the fact that we were coming down, somewhat, on the side of human control, but what they didn't like was some of the fictionalization we did. For instance, the removal of the missile commanders, or portraying missile commanders who are unable to carry out their duties. We have since discovered, through our research, that there have been missile commanders removed from duty because of behavioral problems. Can you imagine, sitting there for an eight-hour, or twenty-four hour, shift just waiting for a computer to tell you to turn the key to launch a missile that will kill millions of people."

The interiors of the "Crystal Palace" were shot on three sound stages at the MGM Film Studios lot in Culber City, California. Parkes, told VG that while the control room seen on screen is similar to the actual room, it's, admittedly, a sexier or more flashy version. The film took about three years to finish filming from the start of research to the actual wrap.

While the premise of the movie is excitement and fun, one can't help but wonder if this could really happen. Can someone actually tap into the back door of NORAD's computer and trigger a nuclear holocaust? It's enough to make you think just how close art is imitating life this time around. And for this, as well as some excellent and believable acting, "War Games" has managed to become a definite summer sizzler we'll be talking about for a long time to come. ▲

Frank O'Connell

Moving Toward the 21st Century with Fox Video Games

Frank O'Connell joined Mattel Electronics as senior vice president of sales and marketing at the time Intellivision was first introduced. After residing there for a year-and-a-half he decided it was time to move on to greater glory.

It was at that point he started Fox Video games with Paul Carter in April '82. Since its inception, Fox has pushed aggressively towards the creation and marketing of home video games. Fox had a meagar start at the June '82 Consumer Electronic Show with the introduction of four cartridges: Deadly Duck, Beany Bopper, Worm War I and Fast Eddie. Since that time, however, the catalog of Fox's games has grown and improved admirably with the inclusion of more innovative and sophisticated games, such as critically acclaimed, MegaForce and Flash Gordon.

*Frank feels, though, that he scored his major coup with the acquisition of M*A*S*H as a video game. He believes in the product and the concept with such conviction that he's now offering the ultimate critic and judge of game software, the consumer/player, $25,000 to come up with a game sequel. An original and innovative way to infuse popular conceptions into a coporate product.*

After talking with Frank O'Connell, I found him to be a thoughtful, intelligent, professional, with that magical elusive trait known as charisma. I have no doubt that he'll succeed in this risky, highly competitive business. His enthusiasm and drive is evident in his every word and gesture. I enjoyed our meeting and feel that with the future of our industry in such capable hands we can all look forward to a brighter and more profitable tomorrow.

> "... we will eventually go beyond games into other forms of entertainment, particularly as the technology develops and ability to get much more intense interaction takes place..."

By Beau Eurell

VIDEO GAMES: Having worked at Mattel Electronics in the past and now heading Fox Video Games, how do the two companies differ?

FRANK O'CONNELL: At Mattel we were involved with the hardware and the software. Here at Fox, we're strictly involved and concerned with the software. We really pour all of our energy into the creative end and game design side. We also monitor the development of hardware and the popularity of the systems to determine at what point it becomes economically feasible for Fox to start producing software for a particular system. About 80% of all the software we develop is licensed property, like *M*A*S*H* and *The Fall Guy.* What we're striving for is to get to the point where we release a new movie or television show and, simultaneously, a video game in multiple formats.

VG: You started Fox a year ago. Why did you decide to go out on your own?

F O'C: It seemed to me that the electronics and software areas were probably the hottest consumer areas at that time. It looked like a market that would have some very healthy growth. So I couldn't think of a better place to come and apply my skills and knowledge of the consumer and marketing than in this area. From Fox's standpoint, getting into the video games business was a natural extension, having already been in the software entertainment business. Further, Fox had pioneered the prerecorded video cassette tape business, so they had already gone into homes with an entertainment product and had been involved with software for the videodisc.

There are some other similarities between the film business and what we're doing here at the video games division. In both, we're dealing with the creative product and its creative people. Actors, actresses and writers are very similar to game designers in many ways. Secondly, there is the risk factor of hits and misses. That's what Fox and the film business run on. They're comfortable with that kind of risk and reward. The third area is manufacturing and distribution. Fox produces about half of the films it distributes. It produces about 12 films a year and then distributes 12 films from independent producers. Well, we're really doing the same thing here at Fox Video Games. We're producing about half of our products inside and we're using, in essence, independents on the out-

side to get our other game products. So there's another kind of similarity. These outside games are referred to, in the business, as pick-ups.

VG: When you started the company did you bring people on board with you that you worked with at Mattel?

F O'C: The company was started by myself and Paul Carter. Paul's background was in the financial area, accounting and control. What we looked for was experienced game designers, number one. At that time, the people who had experience on the Atari 2600 probably numbered less than 100 in the United States. Those were the first types of people we brought on board. Since then, what we've done is brought on people with strong, consumer product background outside of the game design area. We felt that the industry, in general, was weak in its ability to market its products. So we looked for very experienced people in that area, not necessarily people who knew anything about the electronics business, but people who knew and understood the consumer. In the sales area, we sought people from all areas, with a special eye towards professional sales people who understood the channels of distribution that we were in, the mass market channels of distribution. Now we've got quite an interesting mix of people. We also said, "Look, we've got to be better than the competition!" In order to do that, you just can't make up your company with people that came from just Atari, Mattel, or whatever, so we were looking for a different mix of people with different perspectives on business.

VG: Is the philosophy of Fox Video Games to stay in the realm of movies and television shows, ala *MASH* and *The Fall Guy*, or will you be branching out into other areas as well?

F O'C: We are interested in anything where there is an entertainment product that has high awareness among our target audience where we think a game can be developed. We will eventually go beyond games into other forms of entertainment, particularly as the technology develops and the ability to get much more intense interaction takes place. We take entertainment in a very broad sense of the word. It just doesn't mean movies and television to us.

VG: Can you tell us about the process of getting a game produced at Fox?

F O'C: Right now we're changing our whole approach to game design. When we began on the Atari 2600 the hardware was so restrictive that we relied strictly on the programmer to also act as the game designer. It was really one person, and frequently he was also the person that came up with the game concept because he knew what the hardware could and could not do. Now, as we move towards much more sophisticated pieces of equipment with greater capabilities, we are trying to do two things: put more creativity into the game design side and also put more technology into the software side. We are now moving away from the game designer and programmer being one person. We're moving more towards the team development approach. It's very similar to the way that you produce movies.

The way we start, if we're dealing with a property, is to test the property because we want to avoid making mistakes in going ahead with a property that doesn't appeal to the target audience, the game players. Second, we want to see if there is a game there by testing the property. We test with a group which is frequently composed of people who are just very good game players and understand scoring and the depth of game play. We also take a person who is, in essence, an expert on sound generation who may not know how to get that sound on a computer chip. We then use a person who acts like the coordinator and helps bring it all together. We refer to him as the spark plug. We take a graphic artist, and we put this group together and we start generating game concepts and ideas. Then we start refining them and drawing them out in storyboard form. In writing out the game play, at that point, we start our first testing with the ultimate consumer to see if it is at all interesting. We then go to a form where we start simulating the game, very early on, so we can get something up on the screen and start getting some interaction. We keep going back to the consumer for testing. Once we're happy that we've really got a game there we move to the technical execution side. At this point, we bring in the programming staff and the people who are experts on how to utilize chips to produce sound and really are your computer scientists. So you can see that we are now splitting the game design function from the executional side. We're relying very

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"...you can have a very successful game even if it's not coin-op or a take-off of some already successful theme..."

heavily on the kids to test the games. We've really learned that none of us are experts. We're continually fooled by what we think is really a great game and what, eventually, the kids, through competitive testing, will find really great.

VG: How many games are accepted and how many games are turned down?

F O'C: What we're doing now is cutting down. What has been happening is we had to go almost to the point of a finished game, sometimes six to nine months in development, where we finally had a game that we could test on the kids. We found we were rejecting 25 to 50 percent of the games. Now what we hope we'll do is reject more properties up front that either don't make sense or are bad concepts so that our acceptance ratio goes up. We'll be rejecting fewer games in the final stages but many more up front. Also there is the cost-per-development of a game that is definitely going to go up. We know it won't go down, especially because you now have a programmer who is also the designer that takes the game concept from start to finish, leaving licensing and programming costs to deal with. When you start to put all this development, marketing research and other groups up front, that's a different picture but hopefully you'll end up with a lot better and innovative product.

VG: Do you feel that you need an arcade game that's a hit before you develop a home game?

F O'C: No, the industry has relied on that to a heavy degree up to this point. It's been both fortunate and unfortunate, I think. It's been fortunate in that there have been some excellent coin-op games that have been developed. It certainly has been proven that once it's a hit in coin-op it generally is a hit in the home version. Unfortunately, what it's done is allowed U.S. manufacturers the luxury of purchasing those coin-op games and not really working at developing their own groups who can innovate with original games. I also believe that it's a problem the coin-op industry has had. So much energy has gone into knocking off a successful game or coming up with variations of it and that energy should have gone into developing more innovative games. I think the coin-op industry is suffering because of it. I believe some of our competitors that have not used coin-op games or, for that matter, licensed properties, have definitely demonstrated you can have a very successful game even if it's not coin-op or a take-off of some already successful theme.

VG: With the technologies that are becoming available, do you see 20th filling the role of making ecucational games or software?

F O'C: Yes, that is quite possible. We're very much intrigued with video games as a good source of education. I think, as we all went through school, much of the way we learned was either by reading or being lectured to. I think the ability to interact and have feedback is a much more effective way to educate. I remember taking calculus as an experiment in programmed learning. I was not a good math student, but I learned calculus very

quickly by utilizing this new technique, which was a constant feedback technique. Games, by their basis of being interactive, generate more interest and intrigue. I think it's going to lead us to some new form of education. We were talking today about learning French and all those hours spent trying to learn from the book. The difference between that and learning from a disc is all of those great places in Paris and your listening to and also you can listen to yourself speaking French. I think we'll come through some new methods of education.

VG: There appears to be an upswing or leaning towards video discs by game manufacturers. Will Fox be approaching that area?

F O'C: Most definitely! I think the integration of film and the ability to be in the random access of the disc and also be able to integrate computer graphics is an area to look into.

VG: Right now, your games are geared primarily for the Atari VCS system. Do you have any plans to manufacture and market software for the other systems?

F O'C: We will be introducing cartridges for Atari 2600, ColecoVision and Intellivision. Perhaps, also, Atari 5200, depending on how that market base grows. We'll also be manufacturing the cartridges for the Atari 400/800 personal computers, as well as the VIC-20 and Texas Instruments TI-99/4A. We have people who are experts on each one of those systems in-house working on games.

VG: The competition among software companies, right now, is pretty tight and very hot. What do you think Fox will do to not only get ahead of the crowd but stay ahead of it?

F O'C: While we felt we were entering the business early, now it looks like we entered it late. There were, apparently, many people jumping in about the time we got in there, so you really have to compensate for that. It takes time to put a group together, get them working together, get the technology and whatever. So I think it's going to be in the area of innovation and, without revealing anything, I'll have to say probably innovation in broadening the target audience of games players. I mentioned before women and then I would also say probably in the techniques that we use in bringing over some of the techniques that are used in movies. Number one is to design the game and number two is to advance some of the technological aspects of software. For example, special effects techniques but, in the most simplistic answer, innovation.

VG: So you see an upswing in the market?

F O'C: Yes, I definitely see an upswing in the market. You know, it's incredible to me that we've seen the greatest growth in video games and in the hardware units that cost between $100 and $300 during a time that the economy was in a very difficult state. However, now we're coming into a much healthier time for the economy and we've also got millions of people interested in interactive entertainment.

VG: You started the division a year ago. How big is the staff now and how much has it increased since the inception of the company?

F O'C: We really started with zero people in April '82 and I guess it's amazing that we made it to the June '82 CES show with our first four products. We now have 50 full-time employees, not counting our independent sales reps and distributors who total 15 people. We're at about the right point now. So everything is in balance at the moment.

VG: Since the use of home computers is becoming more prevalent, does Fox plan to market software for computers and its users?

F O'C: Yes. There's no question that there's going to be tremendous growth now in personal computers. Every piece of research that we do indicates that over 50 percent of the time that personal and home computers are used they are being used to play games. I might share with you an opinion I have on the personal computer side, which is contrary, I think, to most people in the industry. The prediction is that there is a convergence now between game console hardware and personal computers because the price of personal computers has dropped and the two circles now are coming together. What you're going to see, I think, is that they are going to move apart again. The reason I believe this is, first, I think from a technical standpoint we're going to find that the kind of peripherals and the type of hardware that are required to achieve an intense interaction is going to be very different than the kind of hardware that's going to be used for serious computing and for other applications. There is a big portion of the population that really will never be interested in computers and the benefits that personal computer manufacturers are going to provide for the consumer. Those types of consumers, the non-serious application-type consumer, will stay with the person that makes the hardware just for him. It probably won't have a keyboard. It will have much friendlier interacting types of devices. I think you'll find the reverse then. They'll be willing to pay a tremendous amount of money for it.

VG: Does Fox welcome comments and letters regarding games and prospective games ideas from the consumer or player?

F O'C: Yes, we read the consumer mail very carefully. In fact, what we're doing with M*A*S*H is we have a unique contest in which we're asking the game player to help us design the next M*A*S*H game. We ask them for a game concept in 50 words or less. They can will all sorts of prizes, including AMC jeeps and personal computers. What we're trying to do is to get people to respond to us and then to go in and start to sort these people out. We're looking for new game concepts as well. We're really looking for someone who may be defined as a casual game designer, someone who probably really has a knack for it but who has not commercially been involved. It's probably similar to the film studios trying to find a new actor or actress through screen testing.

VG: How will Fox adapt to the changes in hardware systems and software?

F O'C: As soon as we become aware of a piece of technology that's going to be applied either on the hardware or software side, we immediately try to learn everything we can about it. So, we get on the cutting edge of the application of new technology. I'll give an example. We have had some very serious discussions, over the last few months, with people who are experimenting in the areas of three dimensional graphics. We want to be there, on the software side, when that capability exists. Since we are capable of doing work outside, as well as inside, sometimes if there's a piece of technology on the outside, contractors working outside can move much faster than if you have to bring it in-house, learn about it and then apply it.

VG: What other different technologies is Fox looking into now?

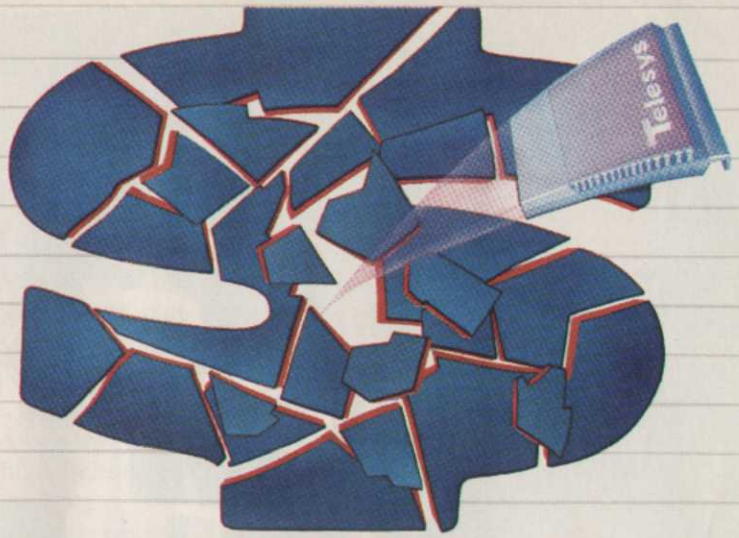
F O'C: We already talked about the interactive videodisc, that's one area. We're very interested, certainly, in voice recognition and voice synthesis, the use of digital sound and the meaningful integration of music into games. That still has not really been done. So sound is another area we're really probing.

VG: What do you think the business will be like in the next five years? Do you see it going along at the pace it is right now or do you see exciting things or doldrum things? What's your prediction?

F O'C: I don't think it will go along at the pace it's going at now. The worst thing that could happen to me, from a creative standpoint, is standing still. I don't think the industry is particularly innovative. I think it's interesting, while other people might say, "gee, video games aren't an incredibly innovative area." If we took all the games that are on the market now, or have been introduced in the last year, and looked at them one right after the other we'd say, "God, there's an incredible amount of similarity in these games." So what I'm hoping will happen is we'll see real risks taken from an innovative standpoint. So we go outside of things that are strictly shoot-'em-up games and not borrowing or leaning back on coin-op arcade games. You're going to see quite a different subject matter being used in games and it will really go beyond games into other forms of entertainment. Art forms, as an example. The industry will start to move ahead, away from just strictly games. Again, I think we're also going to burst the bubble that it's just not male boys between the ages of 10 and 20 that are the core group for video games. We're going to see younger and older players.

VG: Is there anything that Fox has on the burner right now that you could tell us about?

F O'C: The one I feel comfortable in mentioning now, for the first time, is the Porky's game. I think players are going to find it an extremely unusual and exciting game. It has quite a different approach. This game will be out in June. The original movie cost about $4 million to make and it's done way over $100 million. It has a very interesting target audience. So all I can say is look forward to the Porky's game. ▲



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Television's Video Game Showcase

By Barry Schuler

Six years ago, producers Jim Caruso and Arthur Mavis opened the doors of J.M. Production Company in San Francisco. They began their partnership producing commercials and corporate pieces for in-house instruction. From there, they branched out and started a series of shows "explaining computers to the uninitiated." The show actually forked into two separate shows. One, currently in the pilot form, focuses on the electronics field in general. The second show is Starcade, *a unique game show in which contestants vie for points and prizes, by playing the latest coin-op games.* Starcade *made its debut in September '81, was subsequently picked up by Atlanta's Superstation WTBS, and is now being preppedfor national syndication. Following is an interview with Jim Caruso, one of the primary forces behind* Starcade.

VG: How did the idea for video games on TV come about in the first place? Are either you or coproducer Arthur Mavis or any other people involved in the show game people, or did you see it just as a good application? Tell me a little bit about *Starcade*'s evolution.

JC: Well, when we actually got involved with the format of the show, video arcade games were starting to become a big thing in the marketplace and, being involved in the computer technology, it seemed that it reached the point where there was a television audience out there for a show using the video arcade games. The reason we felt that there was an audience out there is because of the number of players, of course, and the number of dollars that we were aware of that were being spent on them, so it seemed like logical thing.

VG: Could you describe to us the *Starcade* format as it exists right now?

JC: Basically it's a head-to-head competition between two contestants on each show. They are, first of all, equally qualified to play against each other. We go through quite a qualification procedure so that we have people of equivalent skills playing against each other. They are asked a question based on video arcade-game knowledge and whoever gives the correct answer to that question then has the opportunity to choose one of five games that's featured on the set. They pick the game and play for 60 seconds for highest score and then their opponents play for the same amount of time. Then we ask another question, but this time, instead of playing for 60 seconds, they play for 50 seconds, and we tally the total score. Whoever is highest goes to the first-prize round in which they're asked to identify the playing fields of video arcade games. If they get three correct answers, they get a prize. If they get four correct answers they get a bigger

prize. In the next round of play, they are asked a question and the winner gets to select one of the remaining three games left on the floor. This time they only get 40 seconds to play and whoever gets the high score there then goes for the super-prize round, which is a larger selection of prizes. Again they're asked to identify a game playing field. If they answer three questions correctly, they get a prize; four right, they get a bigger prize. Then whoever accumulated the most points during the three rounds of game play gets to play for 30 seconds, this time to win their own video game. In the final round they are playing against the average score of approximately 25 other people on that particular game for a 30-second period. So the show *Starcade* really becomes the game of *Starcade* and it plays pretty much the same as a video arcade game does, except it takes you to a higher, more difficult level.

VG: How do you develop the questions and what subjects are they about?

JC: They cover the spectrum of video arcade games. A sample question is: "In the game of Ms. Pac-Man, after you've gone through the first level, Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man meet. After you go through the second level they chase each other. Now, following the third level does baby Pac-Man arrive or do Ms. Pac-Man and Pac-Man get married?"

VG: So they're always multiple-choice questions that relate to arcade games.

JC: Right.

VG: Now are these strictly arcade games or are there ever questions about home software that may not have evolved from an arcade game?

JC: These are always related to arcade games.

VG: How do you select the five arcade games featured on any particular show?

JC: Those games are selected by their availability from the manufacturers. In other words, each manufacturer supplies the games that they would like to see on the show. No manufacturer is favored over any other, but, generally we try for the newest games on the market; some of them are still in prototype form. It's completely up to the manufacturer as to which games they send us to appear on *Starcade*.

VG: You were saying that the contestants are carefully tested and equally matched. First of all, what kind of people are becoming contestants on *Starcade?*

JC: I would just say they're pretty much a cross section of the population of the United States. The contestants that we've had on the show range in age from eight years old to 62 years old, with about 45 per cent being female. There is a mixture of professional people, salespeople, corporate officers, lawyers, police officers, and, of course, students—college students and junior high, high school and elementary school students.

VG: Is it strictly based on skill levels or do you take age into consideration?

JC: The contestant pairing is done strictly by game-playing ability. That's determined through actual game playing that they do for us prior to the shooting of the show. Each contestant is required to come down and play a game for five minutes and then we record their scores for 30 seconds and then we say, "Okay, this one played this game well and this one played the same game at the same level," and so on.

VG: Do you ever find that there's some intense rivalry on the set?

JC: The contestants get quite involved with each other, not only on a competitive basis but also on a friendship basis. There's only one winner on the show and we find that the loser most often tries to help the winner win their game. There's quite a fraternity that evolves with the show, which is pretty much the same as happens in an arcade. The contestants are generally extroverted, which, we find, most game players are. The difference here is that if you're playing in an arcade, you're playing for survival. In *Starcade* you're playing for the highest number of points in a given time period. So it changes game-playing strategy to some decree because the primary concern is not to survive, but to get the most number of points that you can in 30 seconds, 40 seconds, 50 seconds.

VG: How does one go about becoming a contestant on *Starcade*?

JC: Well, everybody in the United States is eligible to be a contestant on *Starcade*. We generally like to have them write us and tell us that they're interested. Then we notify them all by mail prior to contestant try-outs that we're going to hold them on such and such a date, please show up. We then go through an interview process to see if they're people that other people would want to look at on television. If we feel they are, we call them back the next day and ask them to play one round of *Starcade*, which we videotape so we can see how they come across on camera. This also gives us some idea of their game-playing ability. We then narrow it down to the people who we feel will make a good show. We want a broad spectrum of players of equal ability playing against each other.

VG: How long did it take you to develop the concept of *Starcade*, and finally get it to the point where it is today?

JC: To get it to the point where it is today took approximately a year as far as format goes. The format continues to evolve as the technology evolves. The most difficult thing about *Starcade* is the technical aspects of producing it, in a meaningful way for the home audience to be able to see what's going on.

VG: Essentially the problem that you had to deal with was how to take what's playing on the video output of an arcade machine and put that signal over the airwaves so that it comes out on a person's television at home. How did you solve that problem?

JC: Through lots of money, a lot of black boxes that we have developed for the show and using a combination of

game technology as well as television technology. Even though they are both video, they are different.

VG: So you actually have to get inside of the machines and take the output and at the same time make sure that the integrity of the machine isn't in any way altered.

JC: That's right. Everybody has to be given an equal chance, not only morally and ethically but also legislatively. This is why we're not only so careful about contestant selection but also, within the game of *Starcade* where you're playing against the clock, we have to make sure that a player has exactly 60 seconds and has access of the score that is on the game at exactly 60 seconds and your opponent has a equal chance. So there're a lot of technical considerations going into all of those things. Besides, we not only police ourselves but we have to meet all broadcasters' standards and practices.

VG: You mentioned that your audience is primarily a family audience. One of the great concerns about the video games on a nationwide basis as well as the local level is that kids are playing video games when they should be in school and that they're getting addicted to these games, besides a host of other problems. How do you feel that *Starcade* influences that fear?

JC: Well, first of all, I don't believe it's fear. We've been involved with computers and games for about three years now. It is a revolutionary form of entertainment that's really revolutionized the audience out there, the same as movie fads, the same as tv, the same as rock concerts, the same as anything else. They all get their criticism, both deserved and underserved. Generally you find that it's undeserved.

VG: Do you consider this entertainment revolution that is called video gaming a fad and, in that light, do you consider *Starcade* a fad or do you think that this is something that's going to have some staying power?

JC: I don't believe it's a fad just because of the sheer numbers that are involved: the sheer numbers of people that are involved as well as, more importantly to American industry, the dollars involved. If it's a fad, it's a fad that's twice as large as most of the major entertainment mediums that are available today. So as I say, I don't think it's really a fad.

VG: A lot of television executives in the past and for a long time have said that television programming is a reflection of the desires of the American society. How do you feel that *Starcade* fits into that expression?

JC: I'm not sure that I agree with the executives to begin with, having dealt with them. I think *Starcade* is probably the beginning of a definition of a very interested audience out there. Not only are they interested in the games themselves, but in the current technology that is available. There is a microprocessor in almost any appliance that you buy nowadays, from microwave ovens to television sets to computers, to arcade games to home games. It's certainly akin to the industrial revolution.

VG: Where does the show go from here?

JC: Well, instead of a weekly show it's a five-day-a-week show with a championship on the fifth day among the four previous winners. That's the next evolution of *Starcade*. It is going into syndication, which means it goes on to over-the-air stations market by market. By the beginning of September, *Starcade* will have access to more than 70 percent of all the households in the United States. It will continue to evolve as the technology evolves which we saw at the AOE Convention with the introduction of the video disk and laser disk games. The more complete entertainment experience that you have, not only in graphics, but in sound and in smells and feels, in the whole thing, that is where the show is going. It's not only being led by the technology, it's also being pushed by the technology and to some degree it is pushing the technology.

VG: The whole point with video games is certainly the one-to-one interaction between the player and the machine. Do you feel that you've successfully translated the excitement and the desire of the video-game player to play with the machine into actually watching other people play on *Starcade*?

JC: I think people basically enjoy watching a competition, whether it's baseball or football or hockey, whatever. As far as watching games, if there's an intersting player in any arcade you'll find three or four people standing around watching. With the medium of television or of movies, or any visual medium, the viewer is always involved in what's going on there. With the people at home watching a contestant play on *Starcade*, generally, they're deciding in their own minds whether they can play as well as the player on the screen. We get letters in which viewers tell us they saw the show, and Johnny Strategy was wrong for doing such and such on Donkey Kong, because they've been playing the same game and they'd done this and this and this and this.

VG: In a certain sense, you're really introducing several new elements, and that's knowledge of the big games, and the actual little intrinsic things that are games like player names, character names, etc., as well as competition between two players, rather than just heads-up against the machine.

JC: Yes. Before each game is actually played on *Starcade*, we give a brief description of how the game is played so that the home audience who hasn't seen it before knows what's going on, and what the object of that game is. Say the game is Xevious: We describe it to the home audience, tell them how it's being played, what the strategy involved is, what the characters' names are, that type of thing. So there are other elements involved, other than just strictly game play.

VG: So you're really creating a greater awareness of video games as a whole.

JC: I talked to a guy back in Turner, who told me, "God, I can't get my 13-year-old nephew to do *anything*, except play those games." I asked him how's he doing in school and he said, "Well, he really doesn't do that well in school. In fact, he's really awful in school." I said, "What's he like to do?" And he said, "He can play games all day, or he can play with the computer all day." I said, well what's so damned bad about that? Nolan Bushnell put it best, when he said that video games are to computers what training wheels are to bicycles. I think that is a good point. The people that we have on the show are interested in a lot of different things that non-game players are not interested in, such as the technology, the computers, the aim —making computers *do* something. They're not at all frightened of them. Game players have no hesitancy to do that. They're generally, overall, just more interesting people than most. △

Summer Fun!

Tip Offs

Strategies for beating five of the season's hottest arcade games

By Steven Epstein, Jim Freund, Jaffe Hwang, Hector Rodriquez Jr., Roger C. Sharpe, Daniel "Digit" Tratford

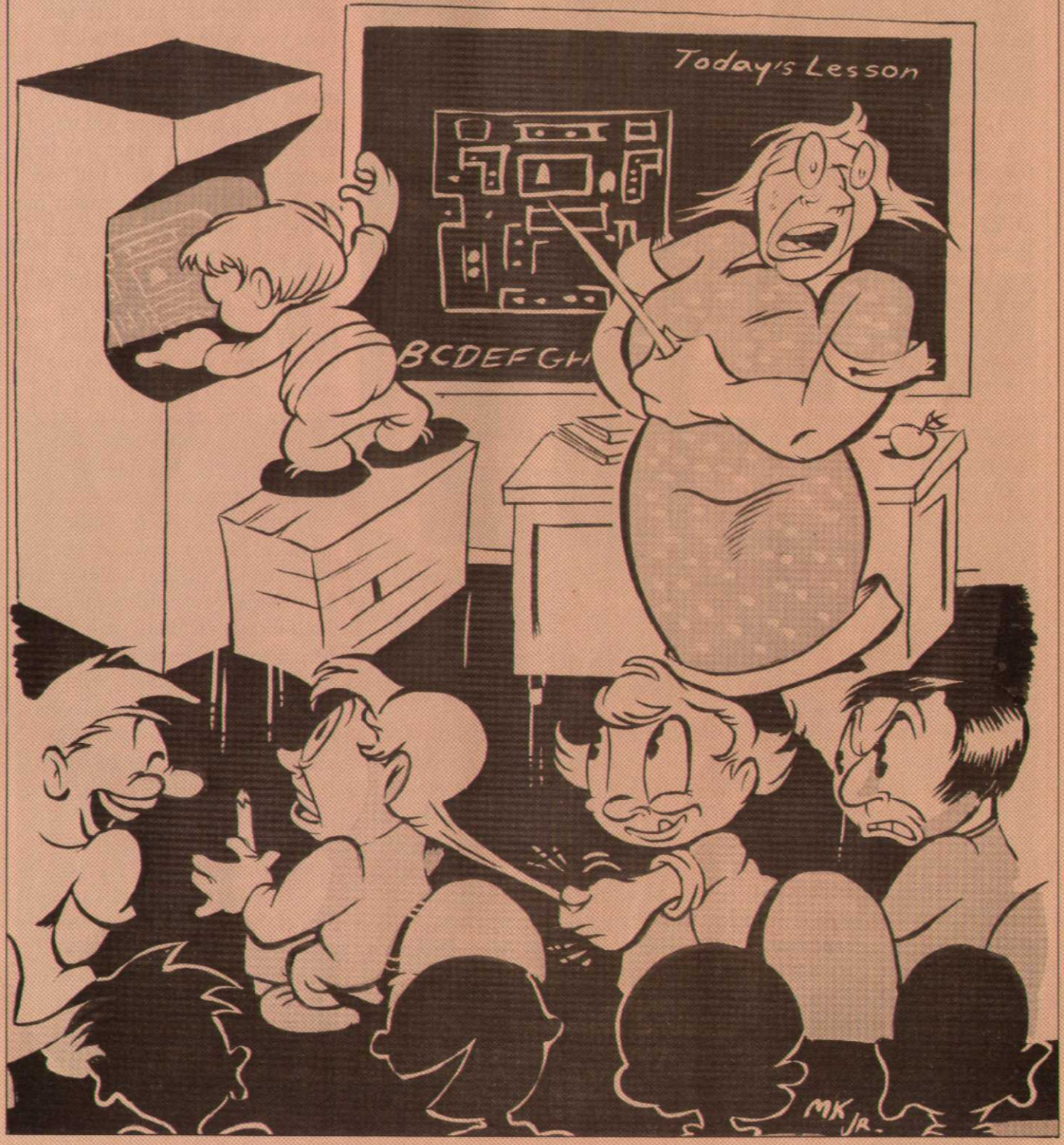


Illustration by Milton Knight

Bally's Baby Pac-Man

"Old Yeller" and his amazing maze which helped launch a Saturday morning cartoon show and fueled what was to become a universal phenomenon is back, only this time he's incorporated pinball play in a hybrid creation that brings together the best of both coin-op worlds in one package. The controls include a joystick for movement in the video portion of the game, while two buttons are at either side of the front panel, as well as two additional ones more conventionally placed at the sides, for activating the flippers on the lower pinball field.

OVERVIEW: The basic play of Baby Pac-Man is fairly straightforward. You begin in that familiar maze, trying to gobble down dots while eluding four deadly adversaries, only this time there aren't any energizers to chomp in order to turn the tables. There are two escape doors at the bottom of the screen and once you enter, it's time to play pinball.

Pressing the right flipper button sends the ball out onto a shortened playfield that features a center bank of five drop targets, two inner placed kick-out holes and side spinner lanes with the left providing a way to spell out F-R-U-I-T and increase a video screen value incrementally up to 50,000 points, and a right side for T-U-N-N-E-L and the opportunity to open up the side doors on the maze and also increase your 'tunnel speed'. There are also two shorter lanes leading down to the flippers which can mean an energizer when lit. In addition, behind the drop target bank, is a captive ball—hit it hard enough to send it over to the other side and there's an energizer that's awarded.

Once the ball 'drains' between the flippers, it's back to the video

screen where it's a matter of surviving for as long as you can using whatever energizers you might have gained as carefully as possible since there's no escape at this point. If you're able to finish off the maze, another maze follows (there are three basic maze configurations in all) and the escape doors at the bottom are once again open for getting back to the pinball field.

STRATEGY: There's really no single pattern or approach to playing Baby Pac-Man, although some tips might be well worth considering if you haven't yet tried them. In the maze you can run around gobbling everything in sight, but the *real* points are going to be gained on the pinball field, at least in terms of building up potential values. So you might want to finish off the bottom portion of the maze before escaping, leaving the top part for those last gasp attempts once you've lost the ball below.

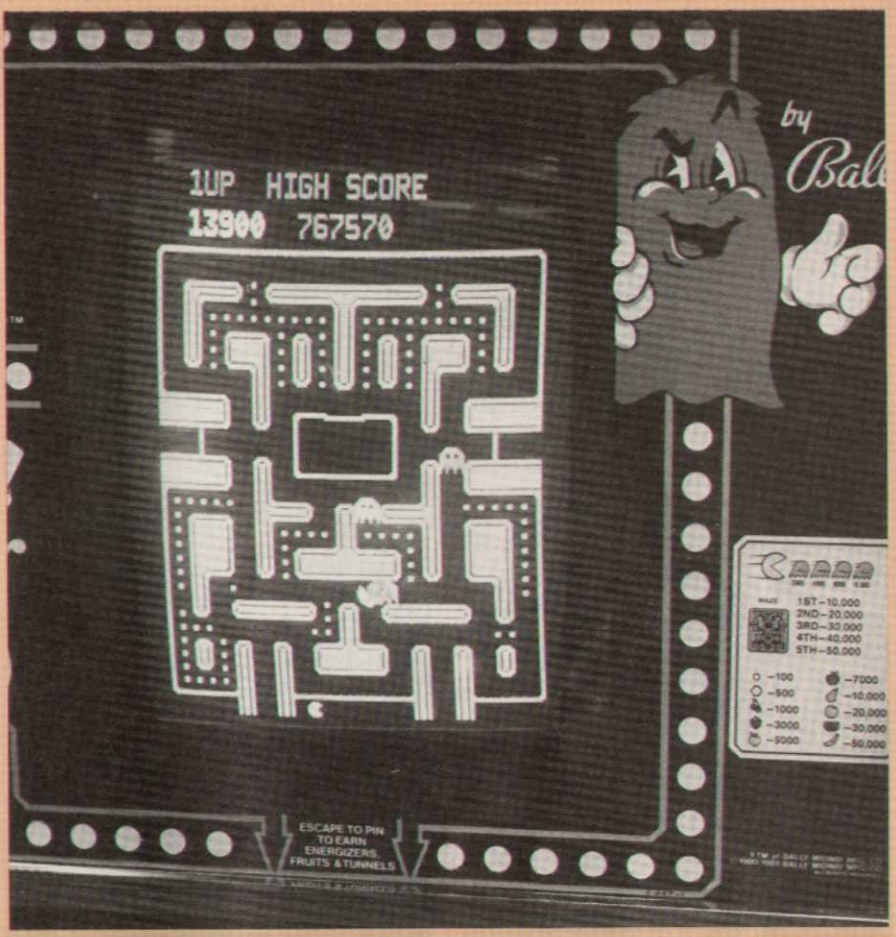
The energizers can provide a useful tool in gaining access back to the video maze since you might be able to follow a rather standard scenario. Hit the captive ball over and light one energizer (usually one of the top two on the maze) and then land in the kick-out hole that's on the same side, which will be lit. This freezes the play for pinball and activates the video screen where you only have one escape door to leave through, but you can chew up some dots before the monsters get too close, and then return to the pinball field to do more damage.

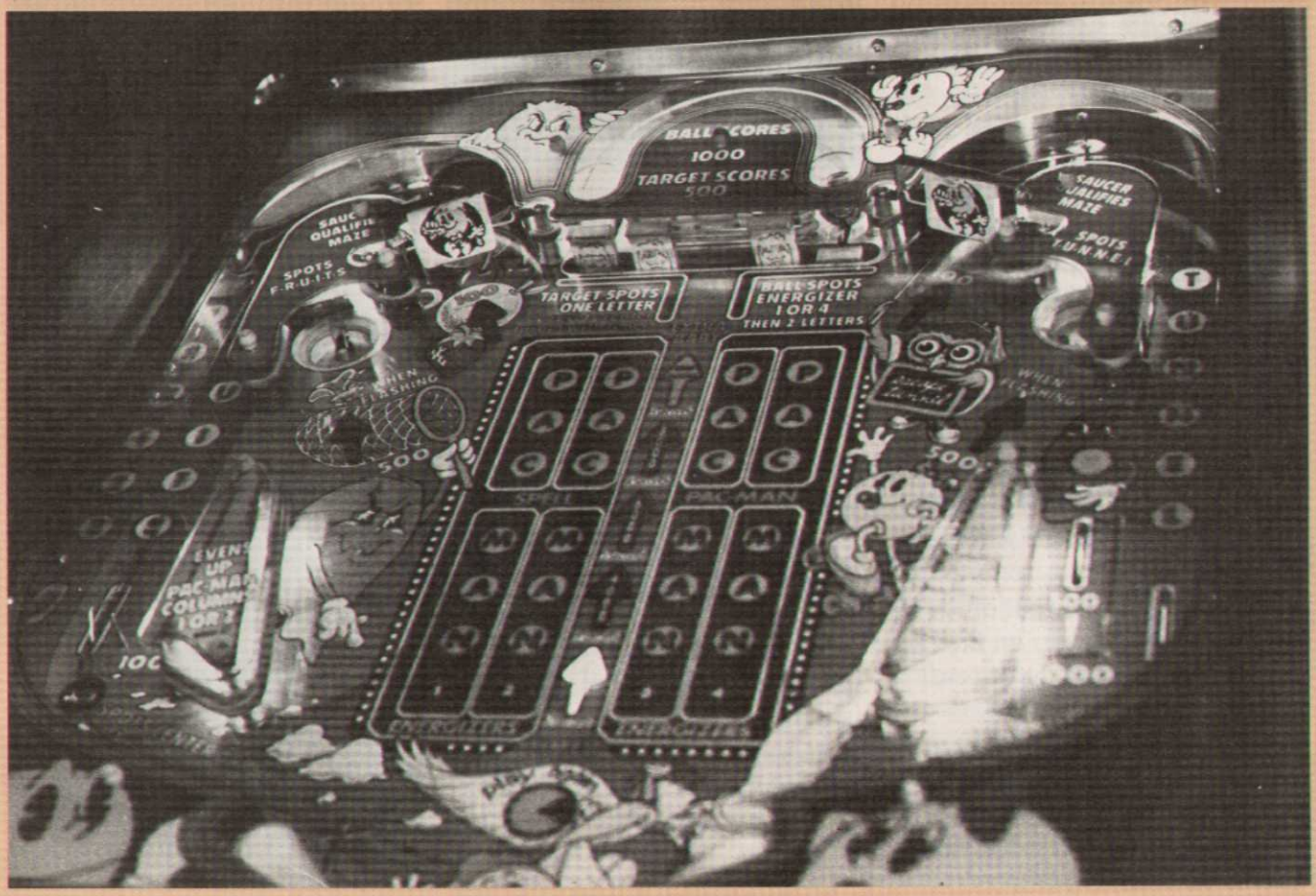
The main shots here should be the outer spinner lanes for gaining tunnel speed and also building up fruit values. Make the circuit six times through and the center blue drop target will be temporarily lit for a possible extra baby, while hitting down the drop targets themselves will light a corresponding letter in P-A-C M-A-N and once a column is completed you can earn an energizer.

In playing the maze there are various opinions as to whether you should be focusing on just completing the screen or going after the monsters once you've eaten an energizer. The four adversaries are worth 2,000 points for the first one, 4,000 points for the next, 8,000 points and, finally, 16,000 points for the last. A better plan of attack is to balance off what you're

trying to accomplish to the extent where it doesn't inhibit the potential of racking up points—and the only way to get into the upper reaches of the scoring is to stay alive as long as you can, not only in the video maze but also the pinball board.

Another consideration with Baby Pac-Man is the setting of the game. What has the operator kept in the memory? Are the energizers you earn, but don't get to, held over for your next turn? Are the side tunnels of the video screen already open when play begins, or do you have to make the right side spinner seven times in order to 'just' open it? Has the bonus baby been put into the game setting via that center blue drop target or can you gain one after completing the third maze (which some operators keep in memory)? These last points will also determine how best to play Baby Pac-Man in order to maximize the action and succeed.





Atari's Pole Position

Although it will soon be available for the 5200 home system, Pole Position remains a clearcut winner in the arcades due to its exceptional graphics and realistic game action. Racing or driving games have long been a coin-op staple over the years appealing to those individuals who like to play in the fast lane. So gear up to see this effort around in its conventional upright cabinet or a sit down model with its inclusion of a foot brake control.

OVERVIEW: Pole Position puts you behind the wheel of a Formula 1 racer as your objective is to qualify for the main Grand Prix on the Fuji Speedway. Actually a race within a race, the qualifying lap is based on time (operator adjustable so each location may be different) in order to gain one of eight starting positions for the main event. Obviously, the faster you're able to go, the better your starting position. However, if you fall out of the running, the game will continue until the overall timer runs out as you speed along the course.

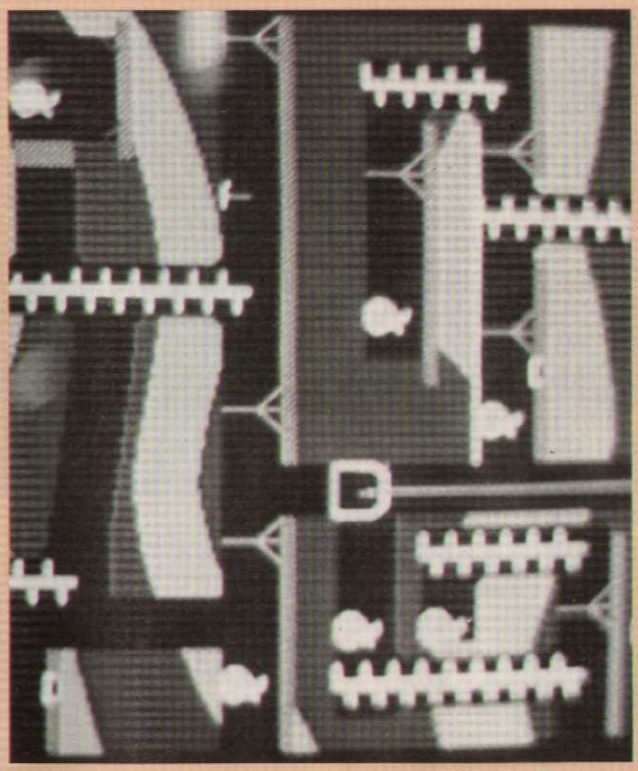
There's a two position gear shift and steering wheel to contend with on the upright model, as well as a foot pedal for racing around the track. Points are scored for speed and distance as well as passing any cars and, once you qualify for the main race, there are bonus points depending upon your starting position. At this stage of the game, you can then compete for three or four laps, maximum, depending upon how the game has been set up.

STRATEGY: The layout of the Fuji Speedway appears on the cabinet artwork and the screen, which you should familiarize yourself with in order to get a sense of where the five turns are on the 2.709 mile track. There are also displays for lap time, speed, and overall time, as well as score.

However, the main concern is to get out and go as fast as you can, trying to avoid the other cars on the track as well as roadside signs which will result in a crash and lose you valuable time. In addition, although you can utilize the side grounds to pass cars on turns, you won't gain any points for the distance covered off the track, so consider this as a stop-gap option rather than a standard approach to follow.

Once you're able to get a feel for Pole Position, it may help you to realize that the front of the car will be moving in the direction you're turning rather than the entire car turning before you. Visually, this will take some minimal adjustment. Some driving tips include disregarding puddles which frequently appear on the roadway and stay on the inside when you're moving around the corners since you'll cut down distance and be able to better 'bank' into a straightaway. Also, if you find your car sliding out of control, after you're done panicking, steer into the skid and keep on moving ahead. Lastly, remember that Pole Position is essentially an incredible driving simulator which means that you should negotiate turns as you would with a real car, by decelerating (or down shifting) as you enter them and accelerating (up shifting) when coming out of them.

Stern's Bagman



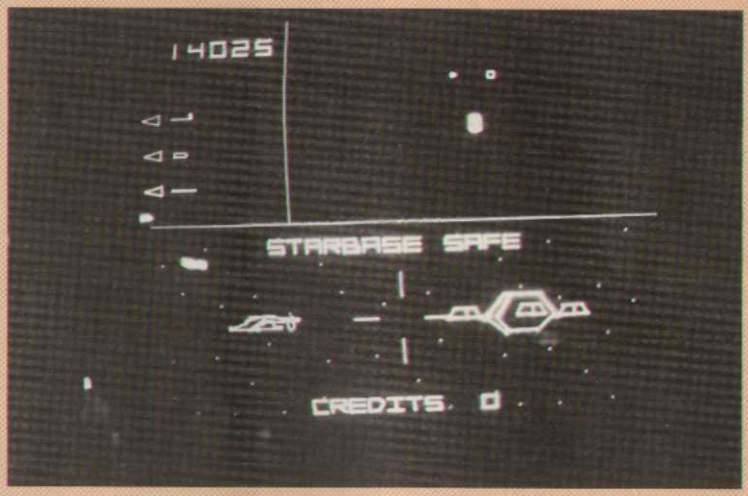
Most coin-op followers associate any licensed games with some behind-the-scenes Japanese company, but Stern went in a different direction to tap S.A. Valadon Automation of France. The result was Bagman, a combination Dig Dug/Donkey Kong furrowing, jumping and climbing and underground tunnel maze adventure game. In keeping with the predominant trend of the past year, the controls have been kept to a minimum with a four-way joystick and a single action button (there's one on either side of the joystick for left-or right-handed players).

OVERVIEW: Picture yourself as an escaped convict where your basic objective is to travel through various mine shafts collecting randomly placed bags of gold, and then depositing them into a wheelbarrow. Points are scored for how many bags can be collected, while there's also a bonus timer to be aware of since it affects values. There are three screens in Bagman, which you can scroll between. Two feature elevators and the other has a special blue money bag which can mean triple bonus points if it's dug out and collected. Besides the time clock which can be replenished whenever bags of gold are gathered, the convict has a cast of pursuers to be on the lookout for. There are two watchmen, who move slower unless the convict is weighed down with bags. As defenses, your arsenal includes a pick-axe to stun the watchmen if they get too close, and wagons, which the convict can hop into in order to gain a rapid escape.

STRATEGY: In Bagman you should try to take advantage of the three screens, since you are able to gain some flexibility of movement. As with any of the recent video games, there are prescribed patterns which can be mastered and a few valuable tips in attacking the action will at least get you more familiar and comfortable with the play. Try stockpiling the easy-to-get bags by moving a wheelbarrow to the middle screen, near an elevator. Then use the wagons to carry all the gold you've accumulated to one place. Only one item can be carried at a time, so it's a good idea to make an occasional deposit in order to build back up the clock. Making several deposits in a row, will then gain you a higher total bonus.

However, although this may be the most direct attack, by staying near the elevators you can run the risk of getting caught between a guard and an empty shaft. So keep yourself as mobile as possible and save the heaviest bags for last. In terms of positioning, be sure not to get in front of a moving wagon without having access to an overhead beam, which is something you can utilize for 'jumping' up on, as wagons pass underneath. Also, make sure you jump off any wagon in the opposite direction that it's moving.

Sega's Star Trek



From television series to movies and now coin-op game, Star Trek takes players aboard the Starship Enterprise for some 'strategic operations simulator' action against the powers of the evil Klingon Empire. With their recent successes, Zaxxon and Turbo, having capitalized on exceptional graphics, Sega has turned the focus to vector-type video images with a split-screen game offering more than enough challenges for any budding Captain Kirk. As for the controls, Star Trek features an impressive array, including a knob for steering the ship, a thrust button for forward motion (or standard propulsion), a warp drive button for traveling at faster speeds, fire button for shooting limited range phasers, and a photon button for firing torpedoes capable of destroying large areas of the galaxy.

OVERVIEW: The first thing you'll notice about Star Trek is the multiple screen layout. There are three areas with the upper left-hand portion containing readouts indicating number of shields, photon torpedoes and amount of warp drive. The upper right screen is the main scanner, providing a bird's eye view of the Enterprise, enemy positions and the location of Starbases. Below these smaller screens, is the Forward Targeting Scanner, which displays a first person perspective of the action ahead, whether it's the destruction of a Klingon ship or the approach of a Starbase for docking purposes.

The game is additionally different from other standard video efforts in that you have only one ship, lose it and the game is over, although it can sustain a number of shots before this happens. There are five basic adversaries to be concerned with: pink, red and white Klingons, Nomads and anti-matter saucers. Your objective is to destroy Klingons, collect Starbase bonuses by docking whenever possible, defeat Nomads, which have their own screen and drop mines to impede your attack, and to avoid shield loss as much as possible, since this is the first part of your defenses which comes under attack. Every time you're able to dock your ship, you'll gain an extra shield, photon torpedo and a bit more warp drive, although there is some give and take in terms of point values as to when you should do this maneuver.

STRATEGY: As a point of reference, the best screen to keep focused on is the top right tactical scanner, since it gives you a panorama of the surrounding area. When the action begins you should attack any red Klingon ships first before they destroy the Starbase, which can sustain four shots—the fifth wipes it out. Then go after pink Klingons before docking and moving on to the next screen. Take too much time with these enemies and they'll turn white and try to ram your ship.

Be on the lookout for an anti-matter saucer which appears every other screen. You can control its movement only because any advancing you do will cause it to retreat away from you. If, however, you try to move away, it will follow and attempt to steal away your warp drive by coming into contact with the Enterprise. You can only destroy this enemy with your phasers.

Since you don't have unlimited firepower, you have to use your resources wisely. When firing photon torpedoes, aim at dense packs of Klingons for the maximum effect. As the game progresses, you'll find that there will be up to ten or twelve Klingon ships approaching to ram you, which is when warp drive comes in handy. Accelerate away and across the screen, horizontally, giving yourself about two inches of distance in terms of the tactical scanner images. Then stop, turn, and fire a photon into the pack that's following you. Rapidly hit warp drive again to give yourself more distance away from any stray Klingon shots. Something to remember is that nothing can hit you when you're in warp drive—you can go through ships, bases, everything.

The pattern will then continue as you move from screen to screen, destroying what you can, docking to replenish supplies whenever possible and trying to stay alive for as long as you can. Once your shields are lost in Star Trek, you'll never get them back and the left side screen indicator will then move down to your torpedoes and finally warp drive. When you lose your shields, the next enemy shot will wipe out the shield indicator; two more direct hits will mean the end to your torpedoes and a third shot will take away your warp drive. A last, final fourth shot will end the mission.

Williams' Bubbles

From outer space to the kitchen sink, Williams has taken players a long way since they premiered Defender just a few short years ago. Whatever fantasy worlds were once represented by a Stargate, Moon Patrol or Joust, the intent this time around is for a more cartoon-esque appeal which also incorporates some very real images as well. The basic action of Bubbles might well be seen as a simplified Robotron due to the movement on screen and the use of a lone, eight-directional joystick control which maneuvers the game's central bubble character.

OVERVIEW: Put yourself in the middle of a sink surrounded by brushes, sponges, razor blades, ants, roaches and assorted filth, and you get the general picture of Bubbles. The object is to simply move around the sink cleaning up everything in sight, except for sponges, brushes and razor blades, as well as deadly roaches, without falling down the drain. Your bubble must gather up crumbs, ants and greasies, all the while getting larger with the more items you're able to get. At a certain point in size the bubble also will gain a mouth, which is a necessity for leaving the sink, via the drain, when it's flashing green. As play continues, roaches will begin to appear from the drain and the only defense is to go after a cleaning woman with a broom, passing over her will suddenly result in the bubble getting a broom by which roaches can be knocked off.

STRATEGY: The basic obstacles in playing Bubbles are roaches, brushes and razor blades with the latter being a foe you can't destroy. Roaches and brushes can be pushed away with the aid of a broom, if the broom is pointing in the right direction upon impact. The best way to approach the game is to try to maneuver around the edges of the sink, picking up any of the crumbs, ants and greasies you can, then going after the cleaning woman for her broom. Another approach, which can result in greater point totals, but the risks are higher in return, is to stay by the drain and move around to get twice the bonus value of any grime that's available, then moving away when the roaches begin their assault.

You should just keep on cleaning until your bubble gains a mouth, get a broom and go after a roach

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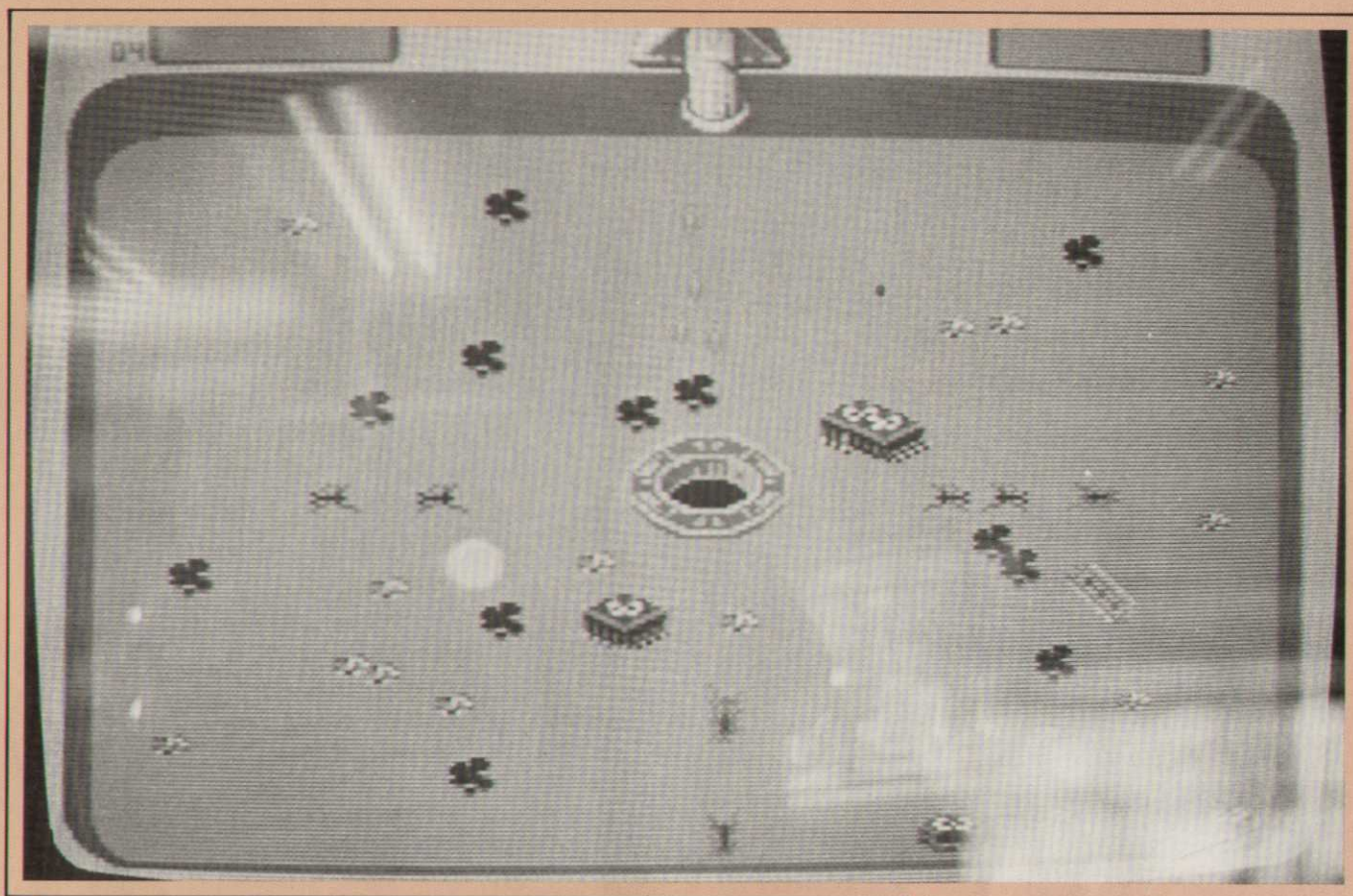

for more points before moving into position to exit down the drain when it flashes green. You'll get extra bonus points for going down the drain and it will jump you ahead two sinks to continue the battle. Finishing off all the obstacles on any sink and not exiting, will end that sink and only advance you to the next one. If in your cleaning you're getting too large for your own good, you can try to bump into sponges and brushes (when your bubble has a smile) in order to get smaller in size.

There are bonus rounds, or 'sinks' which will occur at the 9th sink, 16th, 23rd, 31st, 39th and so on, incrementally. Here the object is to gather up what you can, although roaches can also help since they'll gobble up crumbs in their quest to reach you. Multiple cleaning women appear, but the best strategy is to use them one at a time in order to maximize your defenses and scoring potential. ▲

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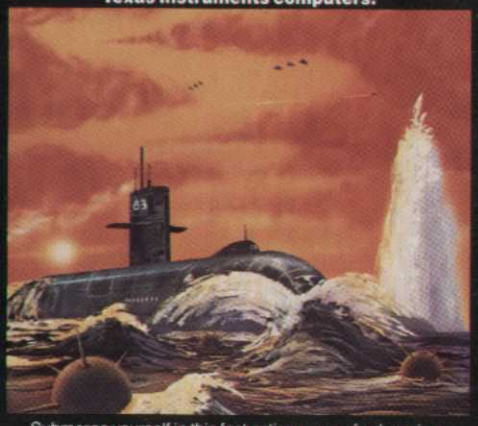

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COIN-OP SHOP

The Summer Fun Heats Up

By John Holmstrom

This is not the best of times for video games. There are more new models than ever, but the proliferation of games is diluting interest in the medium. Arcade owners can't afford to try out all of the new machines. Also the basic challenge of video games is fast becoming old hat. The video game revolution that began in 1978 with Space Invaders is more than five years old. Innovations came fast and furious following the success and popularity of the games at that point, but have slowed down in the last year or two.

The Novelty is gone, replaced by MTV and home computers. And now where can the warning signs of change be more evident than the sudden appeal of such amusement and novelty games as Chexx, Namco's Sweet Licks and Shoot Away, and other unconventional video attractions. It's not that today's games are inferior to past efforts, in fact, many of them would have been substantial hits if they had been released two or three years ago. What is lacking from the new games is, however, that almost forgotten sense of discovery and excitement the early games seemed to provide.

Although these are bad times, one can't discount that the future holds out the promise of some dramatic developments. This year's AMOA Convention, which is scheduled to be held in New Orleans in November, should offer a further look at the first generation of laserdisc games which may well prove to be a viable coin-up entertainment alternative. In addition, newer and more technologically advanced systems are being readied to substantially upgrade and transform the video games we've all become so used to playing.

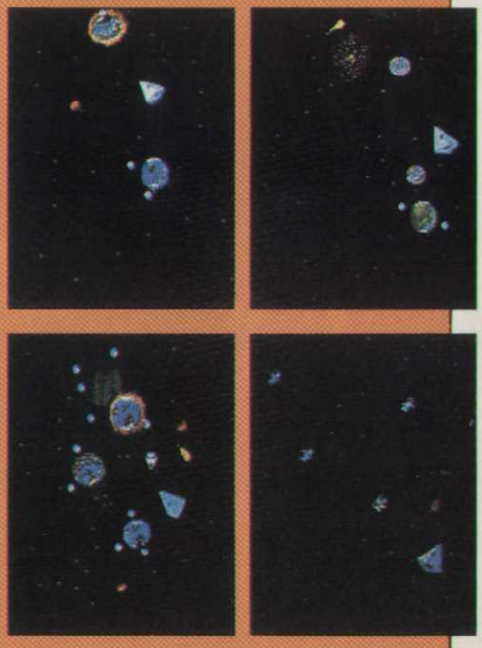
So don't despair if the latest models seem to be less than awe-inspiring, since there's still a number of games which have managed to rise above the norm. Pole Position and Gyruss and just two which come to mind, but have no fear that others won't reach the inner circles of certifiable winners before the summer comes to an end.

Gottlieb's MAD PLANETS

For literally decades, its name was synonymous with pinball machines, but Gottlieb recognized the changing moods and desires of players when it introduced its first totally developed in-house video game, Reactor, little more than a year and a half ago. Based on atomic theory and taking place in a nuclear reactor, it was far less than a resounding success. Not willing to let history repeat itself, the company then turned its video fortunes around with the highly-imaginative Q*Bert. Now, for its third effort, Gottlieb is returning to atomic theory with Mad Planets, only this time the result is an outer space, interplanetary shooting game with fast action and strong graphics.

The game begins when several planetoids appear on screen and start whipping around while also growing in size. If your spaceship can blow them all up before they become planets, a special bonus is awarded. Otherwise, the ones you don't get sprout orbiting moons, which protect the planet with an invisible force field. Then the mission becomes one of trying to destroy all of a planet's satellites, which will result in the creation of a "mad planet" that turns red and enters a dangerous, out of control orbit. Presumably, the planet is angry at you for killing off its moons, which is probably where the title Mad Planets comes from.

As the game continues, the challenges come from the speed of the planets' orbits and their moons as well as yellow comets which whiz by. Every 10,000 points awards a bonus ship, while every attack wave is followed by a bonus round. In this stage you're trying to destroy comets and also rescue an almost endless stream of stranded astro-



nauts for extra points. Once the quota of comets is used up, however, it's back to the battle against the planets. In later rounds, these castaway astronauts can also be picked up in planet rounds.

Mad Planets features a hand grip with a fire button which allows you to move your ship anywhere on the screen, and a rotate knob to aim the spaceship's gun. But collide with a planet, moon, or comet and you'll lose a ship. Although the control panel is probably the best you would want, one problem with the game play is that your ship is very big in relations to the other elements on the screen, especially considering how fast the planets move.

The graphics are pretty good and the visual effects of the moons and mad planets are interesting, but you don't play this game because of how it looks. This helps, but it's the frenetic game play and the rock-oriented soundtrack which make Mad Planets worth playing. It's an exciting space game, yet the concern here is that it might not hold players' interest over the long haul. There are many science-fiction games around, and so the question arises as to whether the motivation is enough to keep playing in an effort to reach the higher levels since, as the game gets more difficult, there's nothing new to see or experience.

Williams'

BUBBLES

Williams has released some great games such as Robotron, Defender, and Sinistar, but their cartoon games—Make Trax and now Bubbles—leave something to be desired. Both involve the theme of housework. In Make Trax you cleaned the floor. In Bubbles you clean the sink. Obviously somebody thinks that housework is fun, and that people will pay quarters to do it.

Bubbles, the main character, is a soap bubble controlled by a lone omnidirectional joystick. His job is to pick up dirt and bugs that infest a kitchen sink. Crumbs are 100 points, ants are 150, and greasies are worth 200 points. Through the course of the game, the ants climb out and into the sink's drain-hole, while the crums and greasies slowly slide in. The more points Bubbles picks up, the bigger he gets, and the harder it is for him to avoid being popped by one of his enemies—brushes and sponges (which he can bump out of the way once he picks up enough points to grow a mouth), roaches (that can only be killed with a broom handle), and the always deadly razer blades.

Players can gain a helpful broom by picking it up from an on-screen cleaning lady, and they also periodically pop out of the drain. When you're able to get to the woman (could she be the wife of the Ty-d-bol man? you pick up bonus points, including any ants or dirt she's swept up. Once all the dirt is cleaned up, the sink fills with water. If the bubble isn't big enough, he falls down the drain and you lose one. Otherwise, you pick up a bonus for clearing the sink. If you're able to go down the drain when it flashes green, you'll jump ahead two screens and receive a substantial bonus.

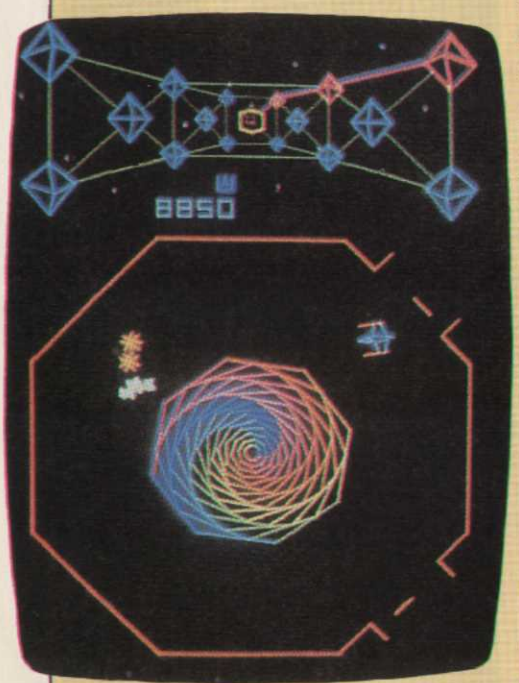
Despite the fact that Bubbles features a single joystick control, it's still a fairly complex game. The more successful you are at picking up points, the bigger the bubble gets and once this happens, you run the risk of having it pop before you can safely escape to another sink. The dirt is always moving toward the drain and although points are doubled at this point, it's easy to slide into the hole and lose a man—or bubble, whatever the case may be. His many enemies guard the drain, so it's often impossible to jump ahead when the hole flashes green.

The worst aspect of this game is the slipperiness of the soap bubble. It's very difficult to guide it accurately, so instead of the happy-go-lucky feeling you're probably supposed to get from the nice smiling bubble, the player is left frustrated and helpless as it slips and slides around the sink. In addition, while many of the different elements of gameplay are interesting, the drawbacks turn the experience into a less-than-satisfying one. Besides, no matter how much fun the game might be, it's still about cleaning the sink and not too many people go to an arcade so they can clean the sink. After all, we can all do this drudgery at home.

Cinematronics'

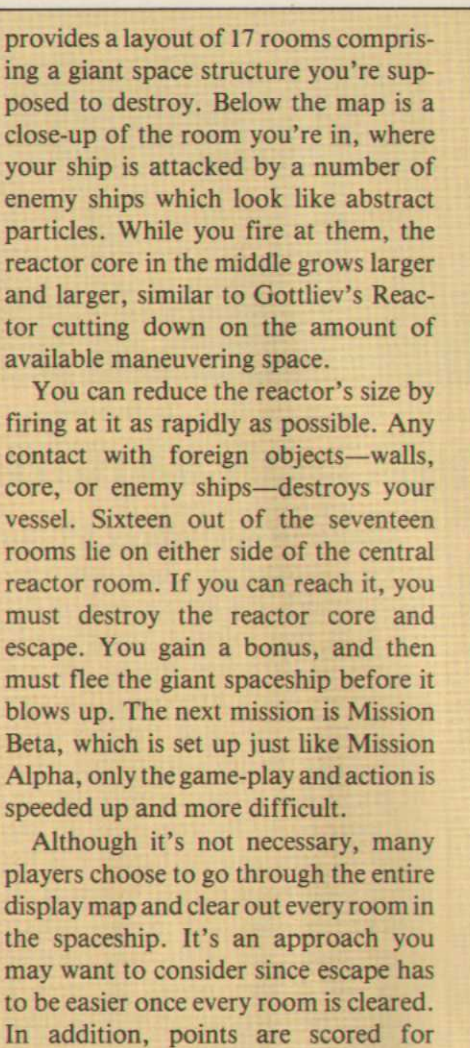
While the world waits for the company to release Dragon's Lair (the animated laserdisc game), Cinematronics has sent us Cosmic Chasm to keep us occupied in the meantime. While it's not as revolutionary as Dragon's Lair, it is a solid science-fiction shoot-'em-up with very sophisticated vector graphics, an attractive new cabinet design and challenging game-play.

There are four controls positioned conveniently on either side (for left and right-handed players), including a directional knob in the middle, a thrust button just next to this, a fire button and a shield button below the thrust. When the game begins, you're sent on Mission Alpha—and enter the room at the top right of a display map which provides a layout of 17 rooms comprising a giant space structure you're supposed to destroy. Below the map is a close-up of the room you're in, where your ship is attacked by a number of enemy ships which look like abstract particles. While you fire at them, the reactor core in the middle grows larger and larger, similar to Gottliev's Reactor cutting down on the amount of available maneuvering space.



You can reduce the reactor's size by firing at it as rapidly as possible. Any contact with foreign objects—walls, core, or enemy ships—destroys your vessel. Sixteen out of the seventeen rooms lie on either side of the central reactor room. If you can reach it, you must destroy the reactor core and escape. You gain a bonus, and then must flee the giant spaceship before it blows up. The next mission is Mission Beta, which is set up just like Mission Alpha, only the game-play and action is speeded up and more difficult.

Although it's not necessary, many players choose to go through the entire display map and clear out every room in the spaceship. It's an approach you may want to consider since escape has to be easier once every room is cleared. In addition, points are scored for shooting down the enemy ships, which is a Simpler task than destroying the reactor core. Some players prefer to find the fastest way in, blow up the core, and escape. That way they have a better chance of exploring the higher levels of difficulty (there are a total of twenty three). Although the firing is a bit strange—two cannons on either side of your spaceship, instead of the traditoonal single cannon in the middle it's just a matter of some well-aimed rapid firing to survive as long as possible, while long range missiles can be used for multiple, distance hits.



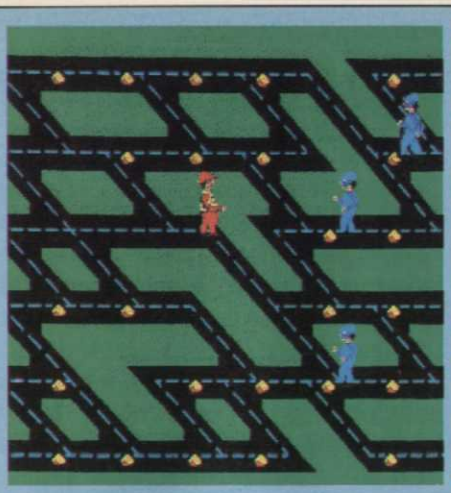
Cosmic Chasm offers fast action and an interesting challenge for fans of science fiction games. As well as those who have always found vector graphics to be better than the rather visuals found in most games.

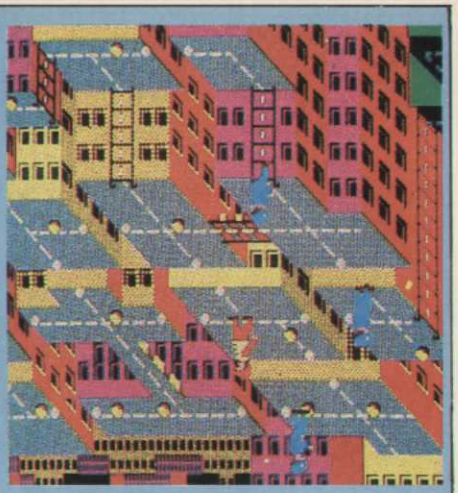
Zaccaria's

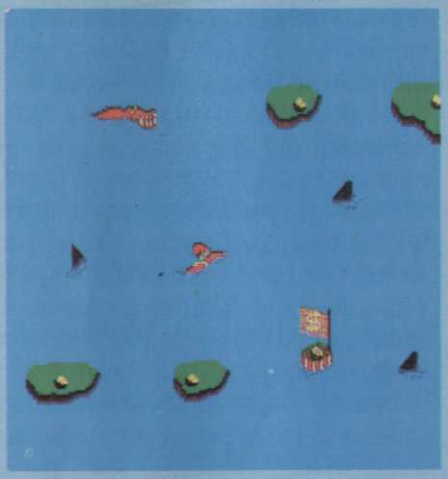
Money Money

"You made much money! Try again!" These are the words players hear at the end of Money Money, and pretty much sums up the objective of this effort. Manufactured by Zaccaria, an Italian company known more for the creation of some innovative pinball machines over the years, their new video game lets you scoop up all the money you can before trying to deposit it into a Swiss bank account.

Money Money starts with your man (dressed in red and yellow) strutting around a three-dimensional Pac-Man type maze, where he picks up small piles of gold as well as larger ones that are also scattered around in strategic places. The latter work similar to energizers, making our hero capable of passing through thugs, dressed in blue, who try to mug him and take his money. Once he gets past the maze, the action moves up to the roofs of buildings, where even more thugs are lurking. The object is to then jump from roof to roof, gathering more piles of gold and avoiding more thugs







Next, the setting shifts to a body of water, where the video hero must avoid sharks and alligators, picking up more money, and, hopefully, a flag that gives him immunity against the deadly beasts of the sea. Before long he's out of the water and in his jeep, which he drives down a treacherous road, avoiding giant rocks that are dropped from the cliffs above, as well as jumping over gaps in the road. Once he's safely passed all this, he parks in front of the Swiss bank, deposits the money, and jumps around in his pile of money.

Player's control the action via a joystick and jump button, while the soundtrack is the most pleasant surprise in this unexpectedly engaging game, and features snazzy versions of eight different songs, including such old favorites as "Cabaret" and "When the Saints Go Marchin' In." The graphics are above average as well with bright colors and interesting 3-D effects. The game is a bit clumsy, especially when the man has to jump from roof to roof, but a little practice can overcome this.

Taken as a total package, Money Money is a solid effort which could give players and operators a run for their money. Unfortunately, since Zaccaria is still basing its production in Italy, the costs to import the games, as well as the availability of parts, may result in the machine never really getting a chance to show what it's worth. However, if you do luck out and find one at your local game room, give it a shot and see if this creation isn't a better-than-average variation on some familiar themes which somehow hold together this time around for some entertaining play.

Entertainment Enterprises Limited's

VAMPIRE

This is a strange game from a new company. In fact, Entertainment Enterprises Limited was only making their second coin-op appearance with Vampire. The player controls a vampire who stalks the streets of a European village in search of women. You've got to bite six of them before sunrise, while avoiding "holy men" (priests), nuns, and holy water fountains. Coming into contact with anything sacred will result in the vampire dying and turning into a skeleton. For some real fun, he can touch his coffin and turn into a bat for some faster travel. Either way, our hero must avoid wooden stakes and can kill the holy men for 600 points apiece. Meanwhile, blondes are worth 300 points, while redheads are worth only 200. (One supposes that not only do blondes have more fun, but they're also harder to catch).

There are four different screens with the first being the European village. The second one takes place in a graveyard with some very confusing stairways, while the third features the vampire's castle, which resembles a church (especially since his prey is a bride dressed in white). And the final screen is a bonus round where you have to use the joystick to plant the kiss of death on the neck of a woman for 2,000 points.

The controls consist of a joystick and a shadow button which, when pushed, gives the fiendish bloodsucker the ability to disappear from sight, and leave an apparition behind to confuse approaching enemies. The graphics in Vampire aren't bad. The village and graveyard screens offer an intricate three-dimensionalized maze but, unfortunately, the effect makes manueverability difficult. The people in the game resemble zombies. They amble aimlessly about and bump into everything in sight. It's no wonder so many video game characters are

Rock-Ola's

Racer Rocket

Racing games of all shapes, sizes and themes have been an arcade staple for years and years—even before video. In recent years we've seen a variety of efforts, not the least of which have been Turbo and Pole Position. There have even been some variations on the theme such as Buck Rogers. But now there's Rock-Ola's Rocket Racer, similar to Buck Rogers in game play, but it's faster, simpler, and easier to play. The vector graphics are easier to look at, and since there is no fire button, you can concentrate on the race at hand.

A hand-grip with a built-in speed button is the only control you need to worry about as you maneuver your rocket down a space corridor, avoiding blue wire fences that stop your ship dead, and green traps which can slow it down. You get 1,000 points for passing other racers and a bonus for completing each space track, as well as an additional bonus for every racer you've passed at the end of a round. Your ship is faster than the others, but they have more maneuverability, and will smash into your rocket

usually robots. However, the main character does wear a very villainous look on his face, as though he really enjoys his work, and when he grabs a woman, there's a nice visual effect of his cloak being put around his prey before he starts necking. Altogether it's an ambitious and not unsuccessful attempt to create a video game that uses a horror theme.

The major disappointments are with the soundtrack and game play. This is an effort that cries out for mood music, but all you get are a few mediocre sound effects. In addition, the pace is very slow, difficult, and frustrating, although E.E.L. promised that they were going to speed it up. Moving the vampire around is still bound to be a very difficult task, however, since there are some joystick problems.

Vampire is a good novelty game. It tackles a difficult theme and handles it very well. Not many coin-op companies have attempted to design a game with a horror theme. After all, this isn't for everyone's taste (pardon the pun) but in an era during which big-time manufacturers are bending over to please the parents' groups and pressure groups that want to put them out of business, it's so nice to see a game that stands for everything that's rotten and evil in this world.

whenever possible. A timing bar at the top of the screen keeps track of how much time you've got left, as you must finish the track before it counts down. Additional obstacles, such as yellow blocks with radiation symbols that clog up the track, and red blocks moving from side to side, which will destroy your ship on contact, appear in the later, more difficult rounds.

The Rocket Racer shown at the A.O.E. is still being developed, and no release date had been set. In fact, Rock-Ola wanted to gather comments and criticism at the show so they could fine-tune it. Well, if anyone there is still listening, the graphics are good, the sound acceptable, and the play is excellent, which is the most important element in racing games. It's fast, easy to maneuver, and fun. Rocket Racer is a nice, simple driving game and the hope is that, when it finally hits the streets, it will have been kept that way for the real world to enjoy.

Atari's Charley Chuck's FOOD FIGHT

To some people, a close play at the plate on instant replay means that a television announcer is about to second guess an umpire; in football it's a chance for viewers to watch that long touchdown run over again. Now comes Atari's Food Fight which introduces something never done before in the world of video games. When a sequence has been exceedingly difficult and chefs almost hit your character, Charley Chuck, in the face with a pie, the action of the round is replayed. The result is a very enjoyable addition to the total game play. Usually when a player enjoys a spectacular run of skill and derring do, only the people who happen to be watching the game get to see it. Even the player might not be able to savor the display since normally all attention is focused on fighting for his or her life. Instant replay gives the player a breather after a rough round, let's him view his work, and offers a chance to call someone else over to watch.

For the most part, Food Fight is a fairly simple game. Charley Chuck, controlled by an omni-directional joystick and a throw button, runs around the screen picking up food (bananas, watermelon, peas, tomatoes, or pies) and tosses it at four mean-looking chefs (named Oscar, Angelo, Jacques, and Zorba). The object is to maneuver Charley across the screen in order to devour an ice cream cone before it melts, all the while avoiding getting hit by food, being caught by any of the chefs, or falling into any of the holes dotting the playing surface. Points are scored for hitting chefs with food (the first is worth 100 points, the second 200, and so on until they level off at 1000 points in each round), eating the ice cream cone (worth 500 points on level one, and increasing 500 points per level until it reaches a value of 25,000 points at level 45) and tricking chefs into falling through those holes. The idea is to hit as many chefs as possible during a round of play, eat the ice cream cone before it melts, and not get hit by the chefs' food.

Some tips include the fact that each chef has a different personality; for instance, the one in the flat hat is the most aggressive. In addition, it's always a good idea to pick up some food before you eat the cone, so that you'll have something to throw at the beginning of the next round. Also, the different foods react in various ways when thrown. Peas scatter like buckshot, bananas spin like boomerangs, and there's an endless supply of watermelon. With the latter, you won't run out if you station yourself at a melon and keep throwing it, unless you get too greedy and the ice cream cone melts. As in Tempest, if you reach a higher level of difficulty (there are 250 of them), you can begin the next game at that level or any other one below it. Instant replay begins at level 6.

Food Fight is an original game concept, and proves that throwing food with accuracy (at least in video) is difficult, so it takes some practice to do it well. The controls work fine, and the graphics as well as soundtrack are above average. The concept is also very funny, but I keep wondering if something isn't missing. Cartoon-type games are reaching the point of oversaturation and once you realize that Food Fight is nothing more than throwing food at chefs over and over again, the game might get monotonous. However, it is cute and may well appeal to some video game players' tastes.

Sega's

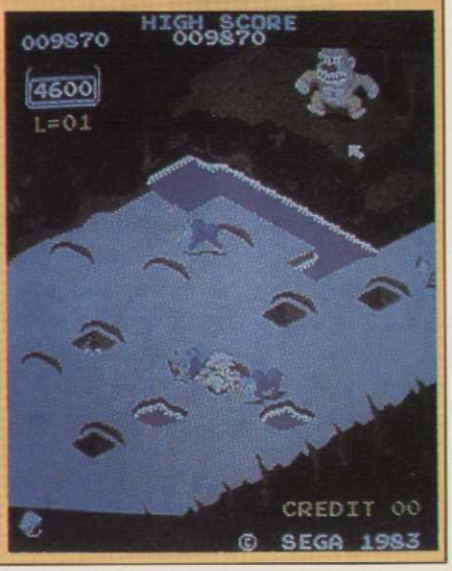
Congo Bongo

With Congo Bongo, we find still more simians (one wonders if it's time for them to be named coin-op mascots), in yet another jungle-theme video game which features a series of maze-like landscapes. However, rather than seeming redundant, the effort manages to remain in spite of all that, to attract video game players and keep them going back for more. Sega, best known recently for such science-fiction games as Zaxxon and Star Trek, can now lay claim to a successful cartoon adventure game which should surpass the appeal Pengo might have had. Congo Bongo combines Zaxxon-style graphics with a Donkey Kong-type of game to create a hybrid that can compare favorably with both of the originals.

The first thing you see in the game is Bongo the gorilla giving the fearless Hunter a hot foot which opens up the storyline and is supposed to be the motivation behind this quest to gain revenge against the big ape. To do so, players must manipulate a now all too familiar control panel of a joystick and jump button to get through the four scenes featured in the game. The first, called Primate Peak, has mountain cliffs to climb, waterfalls to jump, monkeys on your back, and Bongo himself throwing down deadly coconuts. The path is fairly clear-cut, although if you allow the monkeys to get a hold of your Hunter, three of them can toss you into the waterfall, bringing, of course, instant death. You can, however, shake them off by jumping up and down, so all is not totally lost.

If you make it past the first screen, Bongo dances away and you must then follow him to the next setting which is Snake Lake. Here the object is similar to Frogger. Avoid a number of scorpions, before jumping onto a platform. From there it's time to jump over deadly snakes, before making you way onto the back of a hippo and a chance to get to your goal without getting your feet wet. In the third round, nicknamed Rhino Ridge, you're on a flat plane where deadly puddles lay before you, and deadlier, rampaging rhinos are almost continually charging. There are a few "mole holes" you can duck into (at 1000 points a pop, which is a handy way to score the 10,000 points and the free man) but watch out for the weird man in the head-dress who pops in and out of the holes, because he fills them in and can also wipe your Hunter out. If you can jump past the rhinos, up the cliff, and into the final round, your big chance for revenge is within reach. The fourth and most difficult maze, the Lazy Lagoon, must be traversed by jumping onto a palm leaf to hippos, rocks, fish and finally onto dry land at last. You'll see Bongo up above taking a snooze. If you can get past the rhinos charging back and forth, the Hunter can give Congo Bongo a nice, big hotfoot. From there, the action picks up all over again starting from the beginning, only there are more monkeys, snakes, and rhinos in your path.

It takes time to learn how to judge distance due to the awkward perspective in the game, but it's worth it. The jungle music on the soundtack is snazzy, the graphics are great, and the action sequences are challenging. Last but not least, it should get a special award of some kind since Congo Bongo is the goofiest, ugliest, and silliest video game gorilla ever.



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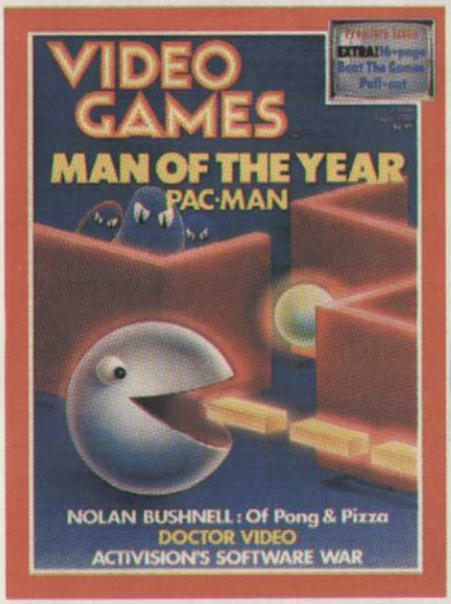

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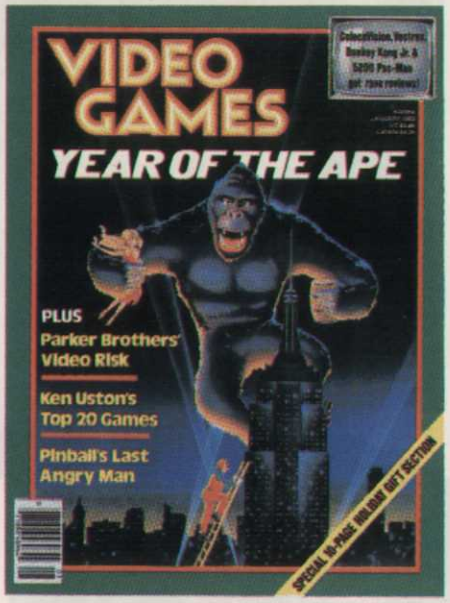

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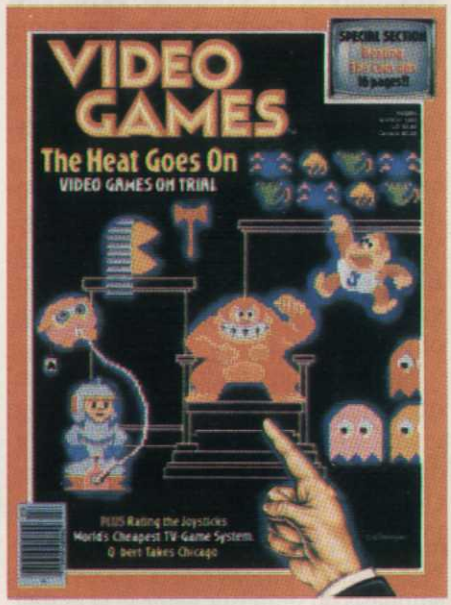

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THE FLIPSIDE

Arcades Offer a Sporting Chance

By Zelmo

With the summer in full swing, the major arcade news is the surprising strength and interest in pinball machines. Although no one within the industry is willing to suggest that flipper games might ever reclaim a significant portion of its former glory. The growing sentiment, however, is that today's generation of players might well be ready to sample some silver ball challenges and the earnings' reports are bearing this fact out much to the chagrin of those prophets of doom who were premature in stating that pinball was effectively dead as a coin-op attraction.

What no one had bargained for, given the evolutionary development of pins, with its reliance on multiple levels and multiple ball machines as well as complex design, was the movement that is currently underway. Put in perspective, the release of Bally's Eight Ball Deluxe Limited Edition (a dressed up cabinet, but the same playfield and artwork as the original), as well as Williams' Warlok (a redo update of their older Blackout machine from a couple of years ago), should have been a warning of what would follow.

Suddenly, one finds the resurrection of games which bear a striking resemblance to previous machines, or direct knock-offs of older efforts such as Gottlieb's duo: Super Orbit and Royal Flush Deluxe. And the over-riding issue with any of these creations is the obvious emphasis on simplistic game play as well as design in an attempt to return to basics and help wean back arcaders who might otherwise be reluctant or hesitant to try their hands as pinball.

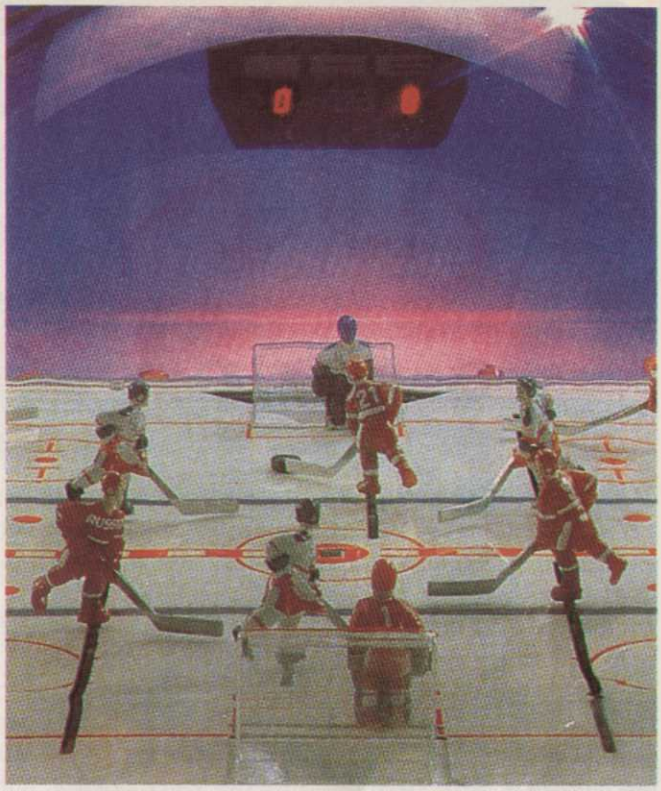
Added to this is a similar belief that fundamental game action can be packaged and upgraded no matter what the format and still be successful. Such is the case with one of the more impressive coin-op stories of the year: Innovative Concepts in Entertainment's Chexx machine, which borrows heavily on the appeal of foosball from the arcades and the old hockey games for the home. Here's a closer look at just what this excitement is all about.

Innovative Concepts in Entertainment's Chexx

For those who only play in mall arcades or any of the numerous smaller game rooms around the country, you might have missed machines such as Atari's Football (which introduced track ball control), air hockey, foosball and other attractions which featured head-to-head action. This type of arcade experience is unique in that you can look your opponent in the face as you try to beat him. The sensation is, admittedly, far different compared to staring down a video screen. With Chexx there's this and more to enjoy in a good old-fashioned hockey game played under a clear dome where each side has to maneuver five men and a goalie as the U.S. team faces off against the Russians in some fast-paced excitement.

Players (either one-on-one, or teams) must maneuver the hockey figures by pushing, pulling and turning molded, red-rubber-grip rods to control movement and placement of the wings, center, goalie and defensive men. Players can also spin the rods to give the Chexx figures the ability to hit or pass the puck in a 360 degree turn. A physically demanding game, a nice touch of realism is the inclusion of the national anthem when play begins and such sound effects as crowd noise and cheers, organ music, and, of course, even boos. The specially designed sensors built into Chexx make it a great workout whether or not you've ever put on skates before.

With an over-hanging scoreboard, Chexx is set up on time, not goals, although tie games can be played out until either side shoots the puck into the net. There are no complex patterns to figure out and no hidden electronic gim-



micks to impair the purity of play. For head-to-head competition, the need is to keep moving. Ideally, you should be trying to manipulate and position two of the rods at once, depending upon where the puck is located, countering your opponent's attack, or setting up your own offensive shots.

When you and a friend are teamed up against two other foes, the best approach is to split the duties of controlling the goalie during the course of play, and decide who wants to play on the left or right hand side. Sometimes this determination will be made on the basis of who you're playing against and what the best match-ups will be. You might even find that a useful strategy is to switch sides in the middle of the game just to shake things up—especially if you're losing.

The important thing to be aware of if you come across a Chexx machine at your local arcade is that you have to be ready for some strenuous, non-stop activity. This is, by no stretch of the imagination, a passive endeavor or one where moving a joystick or pressing a button can be enough to get into the scheme of things. Also, the oft-time uncertainty of controlling the puck and the fact that there's a real live opponent across from you might be an experience that's not for everyone. But if you're looking for something more than you've recently been getting in the way of coin-op entertainment, then Chexx might just be the answer for some hot summer fun that's guaranteed to get hotter.

Bally's Grand Slam

From an ice capade, we turn our attention to the Great American pastime, with what was once an annual arcade attraction: the baseball-themed pinball machine. For years it was Gottlieb who tried to translate the summer game into a pinball machine with such efforts as Big Hit, Extra Inning, World Series, Baseball and others. Now Bally has taken up the cause with a simple, no-frills layout reminiscent of a recent design: Speakeasy.

The object of Grand Slam is to beat an operator-adjustable amount of runs displayed on the back glass for either a free game or extra ball depending upon where you play and what the law allows. As in Speakeasy players are faced with five swinging targets (H-O-M-E-R) in the center of the playfield. There are a few differences, however, in the design which add some interesting play possibilities. The ball can enter the playfield by either dropping through three top rollover lanes on the right side that, when lit, will score a home run. To the left of these is a saucer which provides another way to spell out H-O-M-E-R. If you can complete this task, you score a run and earn 200 pts. for each lit letter.

The area just below this upper configuration includes two thumper bumpers, some good rebounding action and three stationary targets that, when lit, will result in a three-base hit. As in real baseball the object is to get men on base and score them since you're not only gaining "pinball points" but also runs. Also near the top, at the left, is a small flipper that allows you to slam the ball back up in order to complete those features. Move down the board and it's fairly symmetrical in terms of targets.

Those five swinging targets at midfield provide a direct way to score runs and increased point totals. Completing them in sequence (from left to right) will earn you a grand slam and build up values from 25,000 to 50,000 points, an extra ball and, finally, a special. Although this is the main part of Grand Slam, there are some other features to shoot for if you want to build up a 'rally'. The left side provides a gate which, when lit, will result in a single well-placed shot from the bottom right flipper that can be parlayed by an equally well-timed flip from the top left flipper in order to gain access back to the top. At the right side is a spinner which will advance any runner one base at a time for every three revolutions of the targets.

Elsewhere, Bally has incorporated

(Continued on page 80)

COMPUTER CORNER

A SOFT TOUCH
Games, Games and More Games

By Linda Moran

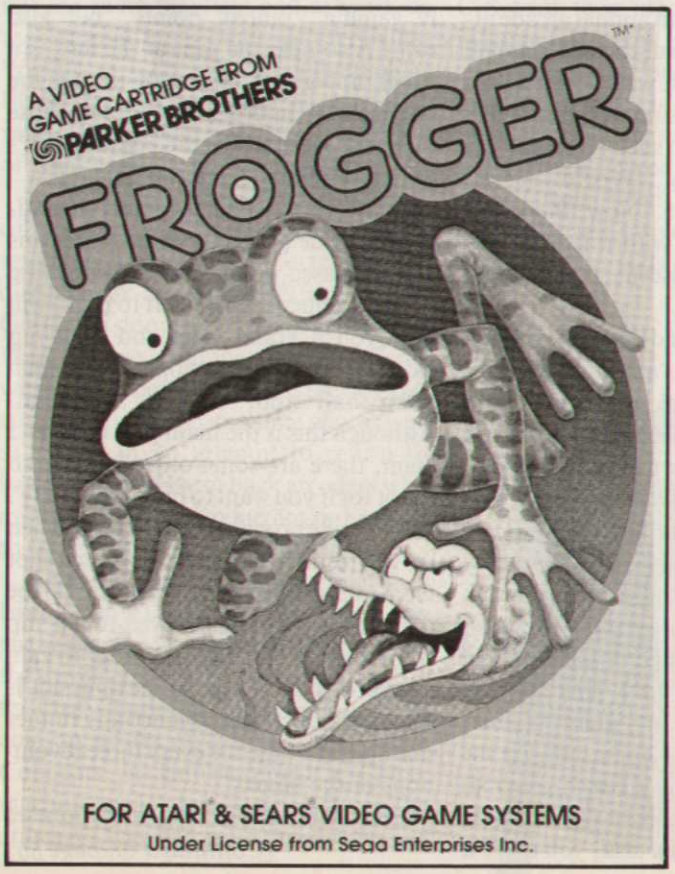
While the development and upgrading of today's video game hardware systems for the home have taken much of the spotlight, a number of software makers haven't been willing to sit idly by. With the overlap between more sophisticated home computers and the previously restricted game systems having appreciably narrowed, given the range of recent announcements, companies who have previously been producing only cartridges for programmable play are now breaking out into disks, cartridges and even wafers. The result is more detailed graphics and game play as well as the hope for even more improved designs in the future. Here is a preview sampling of titles and highlights of upcoming releases and plans you'll probably want to keep a look out for.

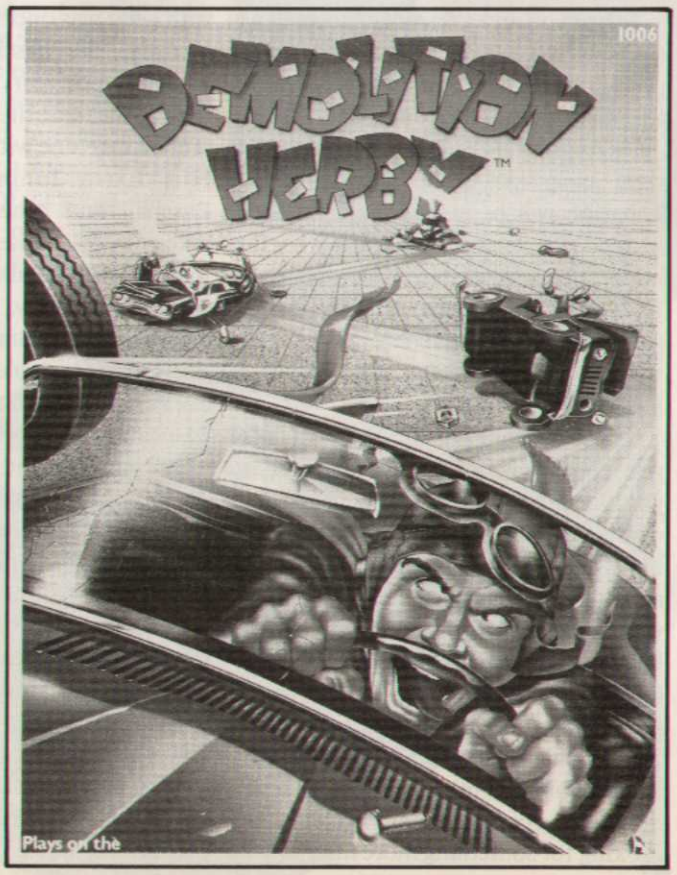
CBS SOFTWARE (41 Madison Ave., N.Y. N.Y. 10010 (212) 481-6400) has released seven new games in multiple formats. The programs fall into the following categories: education, enrichment, entertainment, and home management. Featured for the entertainment category are four computer games for the Atari 400/800, with two also available for the VIC-20. The games are: K-razy Kritters, K-star Patrol, K-razy Antiks, K-razy Shoot-Out, Boulders and Bombs, and Mountain King, released in May.

K-razy Kritters has 10 levels of play. There are eight columns of alien Kritters beaming down on your star base. You must use your missiles while avoiding theirs to eliminate the free-falling Kritters as they descend at varying speeds and frequencies. If one of your command ships is hit, the Sanitation Crew will remove it.

In **K-star Patrol,** compatible with the Atari 400/800 and the VIC-20, you are in control of the lead star ship. The game has 10 levels of play. The object of the game is to destroy the Alien Attack Ship and dodge the invading Intergalactic Leech who has entered the territory to join the fray.

K-razy Antiks gives you a choice of six mazes and 99 levels of difficulty. You





must guide the good-guy through a maze of tunnels while avoiding the enemy ants and the dreaded Anteater. You must also keep your ant from drowning in the unpredictable rain floods, desposit eggs to carry on the species, and eat the enemy eggs to prevent hatching.

In **K-razy Shoot-Out** you are a space commander trapped in an alien control sector with seven more sectors to escape from. The level of difficulty increases as you progressively solve each sector.

Boulders and Bombs offers 99 levels of tunneling adventures under the surface of an unknown planet. Hostile alien vultures seek to turn you into a buried fossil. You use your trusty roto-auger to clear a path to safety through earth, boulders, and the spreading green cave fungus. You then lead your space spelunker from one quadrant of danger into the next. You have to unearth time bombs along the way to get rid of the hazards the vultures toss at you.

Mountain King has eight levels of difficulty. You have to journey through diamond-laden mountain caverns in search of the elusive Flame Spirit—the mystical key that unlocks the door to the ancient throne room and the golden crown kept within. Once inside, you have to make it back out to the mountaintop with the stolen treasure before the cave bats close in. Giant spiders, cryptic chests and musical clues add to the adventure.

The education category offers a game for ages five to 10 years, entitled **Time Trials.** It's a timed road rally that provides practice in the mathematical skills of estimation, addition and multiplication. The child must drive the racer through the randomly-generated fork-filled course. He must choose the paths that will get him to his number goal as fast as possible. Players may choose the level of difficulty based on their math abilities.

Due out by the summer's end from **SpectraVideo, Inc.** (39 West 37th St. New York, N.Y. 10018, (212) 255-8491) are three cartridges for the Atari 400/800 and Commodore VIC-20: Cave In, Number Crunch, and Reagonomics (about $35 each).

Cave In is a one- or two-player game in which the object is to dig yourself out from under a mine cave as quickly as possible. If you fail—you'll be buried alive. Your escape is complicated by a number of life-threatening obstacles that cross your path as you dig to the surface.

Number Crunch is a multi-level, educational mathematical game for children and adults. It has been designed to increase the player's mathematical skills while having fun.

In **Reagonomics** you are in charge of the nation's gross national product. You must work against major world threats, such as an international monetary crisis, a plummeting stock market, the collapse of detente with the East and still come up with a balanced budget. The game comes equipped with charts and graphs to help you plot the nation's way to solvency.

Tigervision (909 Orchard, Mundelein, Ill. 60060, (312) 949-8100) has come out with game cartridges for use on the Atari 400/800, the VIC-20, and Texas Instruments 99/4A. The first four titles to be released are River Patrol, Springer, and Polaris.

In **River Patrol** you are the captain of a leaky boat that must be piloted up a treacherous river. The boat has to be steered skillfully to avoid the many obstacles that clutter the river: logs, alligators, rocks, oncoming boats and whirlpools. To score bonus points, the player must save the drowning people. A careful strategy must be planned and a watchful eye kept on the water gauge so that the dam can be reached before the boat sinks. Upon arriving at the dam, the water is pumped out and one is ready to start on another (multiple screen) course up the river.

The basic plot of **Springer** concerns a rabbit which jumps from cloud to cloud

—working his way up to the sun. You must plan clever tactics as some of the clouds are fixed and others move up or down. Some clouds have treasures that can be captured for bonus points, but each treasure is guarded by a dragon. Springer can jump over a dragon or kick to kill it and score the treasure. The jumps and kicks must be perfectly timed or Springer will fall from the cloud. Reaching the sun is not necessarily the end but rather a beginning of a new screen adventure.

Polaris is another multi-level game, in which you are the commander of a submarine that must be manuevered away from enemy subs, bombs, and the ocean bottom. An effort must be made to launch missiles and destroy the enemy squadrons. If you survive the attack, you must guide the sub through a channel which is guarded with depth charges and prepare for the next air assault. This, too, has multi-level screens.

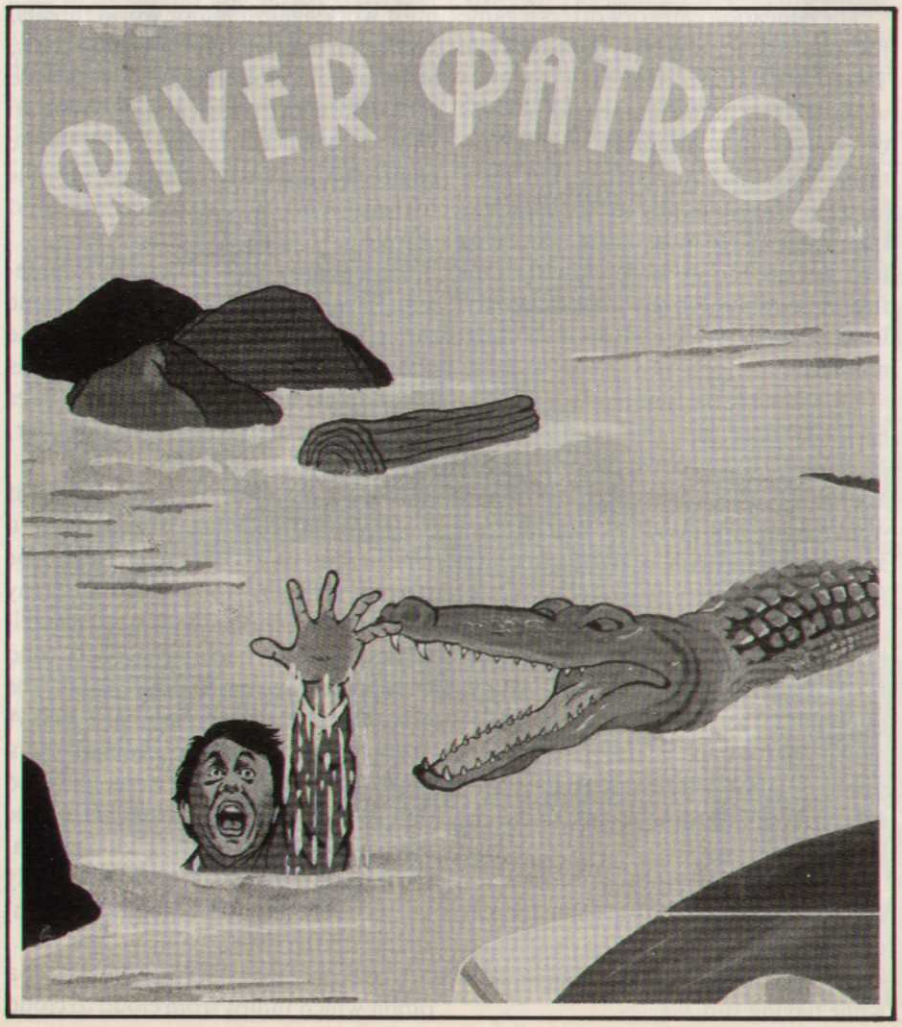
With an eye toward the near future, **Parker Brothers** (50 Dunham Rd., Beverly, Mass. 01915, (617) 927-7600) will produce a line of game cartridges compatible with the Atari, Commodore and Texas Instruments and eventually for the IBM and Apple.

For the most part its line will include popular arcade games such as Frogger. Since the additional power (memory) of the computer offers the opportunities for games to go beyond the usual action games for video game systems, Parker Brothers is in the process of developing more sophisticated play concepts for adventure games such as challenging players to find hidden treasure using a series of clues and so forth.

The adaptation of several classic games to computer format is scheduled. The old time favorite Risk will be one of the first of these games to be introduced.

The word from **Activision Inc.** (2350 Bayshore Frontage Rd., Mountain View, Calif. 94043, (415) 960-0410) is it has plans for designing and manufacturing entertainment software for computers. There are Atari 400/800 compatible games scheduled, including conversions of historic titles as well as totally new games.

Getting in the act are **Atari, Inc.** (1265 Borregas Ave., P.O. Box 427, Sunnyvale, Calif. 94086, (408) 745-4691) and Williams Electronics, Inc. of Chicago, Ill. who have announced plans to jointly market home video and computer games based on Williams' coin-op games. The first two games Atari will release are the popular arcade games Moon Patrol and Joust: they're due to come out later this year.



Imagic (981 University Ave., Los Gatos, Calif. 95030, (408) 399-2200) is converting its popular Demon Attack for the Atari 400/800 and the VIC-20. As in the home game version, Demon Attack features a black universe suddenly invaded by brilliantly colored creatures. The action is nonstop with increasingly threatening adversaries.

Imagic has also announced that it will produce original games for use with ColecoVision and Texas Instruments.

Broadening their scope is **Mattel Electronics** (5150 Rosecrans Ave., Hawthorne, Calif. 90250), with six new M Network games specifically designed for the IBM and the Apple. The games are for the most part conversions from Mattel's current titles for video game systems. They are: Baseball, Burger-Time, Lock 'N' Chase, Night Stalker, Space Battle, and Heavy Artillery. The game scenarios, as well as strategies, are based on the storylines of the original video cartridges.

Starpath Corp. (324 Martin Ave., Santa Clara, Calif. 95050, (408) 970-0200) is in the process of converting some of its current video games to the home computer. The company will work on new games for the computer while continuing the development of new titles for video game systems. Starpath's computer games are expected to retail for about $20.

Telesys (43334 Bryant St., Freemont, Calif. 94539, (415) 651-2970) is stepping forward into computer games. Three of its present VCS games, Fast Food, Cosmic Creeps, and Demolition Herby will be released the middle of this month for the Atari 400/800 /1200XL series. Ram It and Fast Food are planned for later this year for the VIC 20.

Also Telesys is looking toward the future with releases for the Timex/Sinclair and Commodore 64. All games will be manufactured for the international computer market. △

HIT PARADE
Computer Games on Review

By Mark Brownstein

Over the past year or so, the home video game and gamer have begun to mature. The once-satisfactory Atari VCS and Odyssey units no longer provide the resolution or complexity which many increasingly sophisticated players now demand. In addition, the price gap between dedicated game consoles and more versatile computers has narrowed to the point where, including rebates, one can purchase an Atari 400 or VIC-20 for about the same price as a VCS or Intellivision unit; and for just slightly more money, a Texas Instruments 99/4A. While software was once a problem, today there are many companies manufacturing games on cartridges, with many more providing machine-language cassette programs.

This month, *VIDEO GAMES* reviews a small selection of game software from UMI (Universal Microware, Inc.), Tronix, Texas Instruments and Funware.

There are currently more than a million VIC-20 units in consumer hands. Of these, at least half will be used primarily for game play. The group of games most readily accessible to the VIC-20 owner are cartridge-loaded, operating in a fashion similar to those for the Atari VCS, Mattel's Intellivision and other game systems, plugging into the port on the back of the unit. All the extra memory is built into the cartridge.

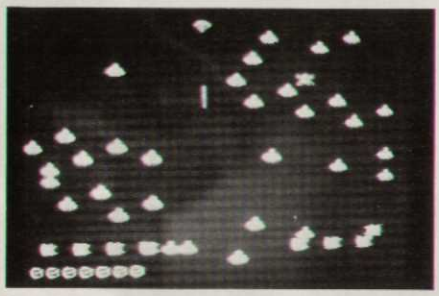
Video Vermin (UMI/VIC-20)

Video Vermin is an excellent game with similarities to Centipede (although this is definitely *not* a Centipede rip-off). In this game, you shoot rapid fire at beetles walking through a field of mushrooms, with points awarded for shooting the beetles, mushrooms, and other beasties which either drop on you, hover over you or simply run across the screen. Contact with anything but a mushroom is fatal.

Unlike Centipede, the spiders here are always worth the same point value regardless of how close you are to them when they're hit, and when hit, they become a group of four mushrooms. It seems to be less difficult to clear a column so that you can pick off a whole armada of beetles.

The game plays very well, with good graphics, color selection and sound effects. At each 10,000 points, you get an extra shooter, and the border of the

screen flashes wildly for a few seconds. Some of the features which make this a particularly good game are the responsiveness of the controller (with a super



joystick, the action may be *too* fast), and the continuous rapid fire. Color change lets you know when you have finished off each wave of beetles.

Spiders of Mars (UMI/VIC-20)

Spiders of Mars is a Defender-like challenge, pitting your Martian Space Fly against the Spiders of Mars, Bats of Saturn, Dragonflies of Pluto and Sand Hornets. The spider slowly drops to the surface, leaving a blue web. Shoot the web or spider before it reaches the surface, and both will disappear; if you fail, the spider will set up a base on the surface and shoot a lethal web up at your fly (the only time I failed to get the spider was when I *wanted* to miss it). The dragonfly drops smart bombs which drift around in space. If you run into a bomb, you lose another fly. The bats just float around—hit them and also lose a fly.

Sand hornets are the biggest danger because they don't let you sit still for a second. If you stop, they'll fire a missile at your fly and, most often, hit it. Keep an eye out for their telltale missiles, then drop behind them and zap them. They can't shoot from behind, and don't seem to know how to turn around, but they shoot very fast missiles.

The characters in this game are nothing like those in Defender, and there's no radar to track off-screen activity. Therefore, it's best to try to stay in the center and watch for the sand hornets' missiles and the dragonflies' bombs.

The graphics make good use of available color, and the action is fast. When you progress to new levels of difficulty, the background colors change. Values increase with each new wave of attackers, with 256 waves possible. The real challenge comes in the waves where there are large numbers of bugs and intergalactic garbage to avoid. The high score is constantly displayed, as are current score and "Flys" remaining. Although this game lacks riveting personal involvement, it is fun and challenging to play.

Super Amok (UMI/VIC-20)

A close cousin of Berzerk or Frenzy, in **Super Amok** you journey from room to

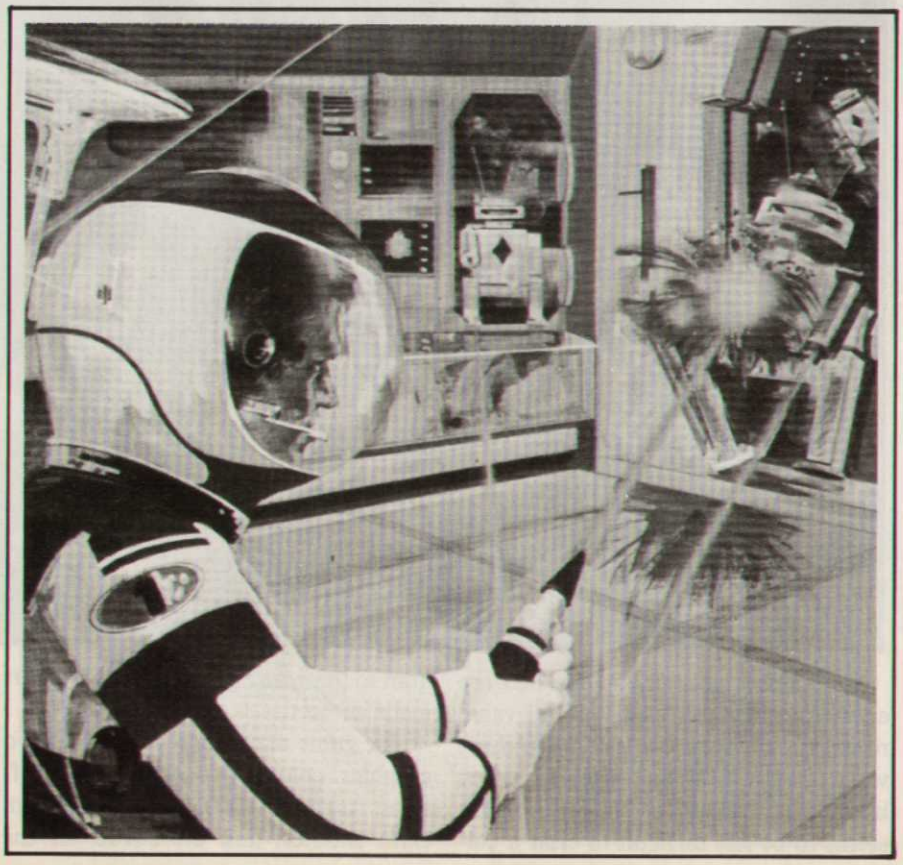
room, avoiding or destroying deadly robots. At higher levels, Blue Blam-blasters and Sonic Saws (which look like blue pinwheels) come after you. Contact with any of them, or with the walls, will result in loss of one of your players. As you progress through the game, you land in increasingly difficult mazes. A bonus is awarded for clearing a room of the maze.

The colors here are nothing spectacular, with players varying from green or black (robots), to blue saws and blam-blasters. Super Amok has versions for one or two players, and maintains high scores for each. In the two-player version, you have to pass the controller back and forth (but there's no other way with only one joystick port).

If the arcade originals rang your bell, you might get a jingle out of Super Amok also.

Arachnoid (UMI/VIC-20)

Probably the most riveting of the four UMI games reviewed here is **Arachnoid**,



in which you are a mother spider trying to protect little spider eggs at the bottom of the screen from the cruel outside world.

To start game play, move Ma Spider onto the playfield. Ma can be positioned anywhere on the playfield—and this mobility often comes in handy. After a very brief rest, the ants emerge from the top, snaking their way down, then right and left, and, eventually, all over the screen, eventually working their way to the bottom. Your job is to keep the ants from getting there. When shot, an ant becomes encapsulated by your webbing, and the other ants must work around it. Theoretically, you can build a wall of encapsulated ants and trap them at the top of the screen, but this isn't anywhere near as easy as it sounds.

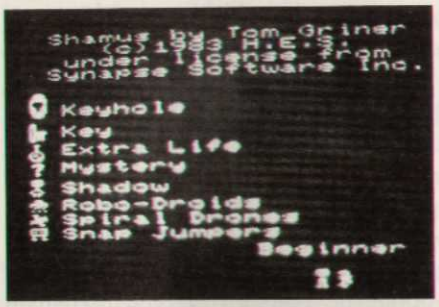
First, the ants can come from at least six spots along the top of the screen, so you can't just stay near the top and wait to pick them off as they work their way down. Second, you can't just rapid fire at them. The more shots you get off, the less distance they travel — rapid firing hits almost nothing. Taking too much time will send shots all the way up, but it won't be enough to do much good. Carefully time your shot and *don't miss*.

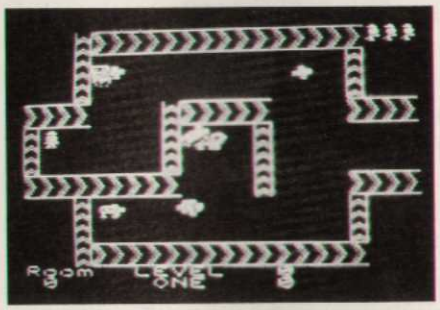
As if the ants aren't enough, deadly wasps drop down from the top. They aren't easy to hit, since your web thrower doesn't shoot from dead center, so you have to maneuver side to side to try to get them. If a wasp reaches bottom, he dines on some spider eggs.

Wasps eat more eggs than the ants do, so you can't let many through before the game is over. Your walls aren't safe, either, since intelligent ants carry away encapsulated ants, opening new holes. The game is actually a timed contest: After a designated period of time, the screen clears, only to restart at a faster pace. If you run out of spiders, or the ants and wasps eat all the eggs, the game is over. Arachnoid gets off to a slow start, but rapidly becomes a frantic race against time. This unique game concept should provide many hours of challenging play.

Shamus (HES/VIC-20)

A cross between Berzerk and your garden-variety adventure game, **Shamus** puts you in control of a detective, who is making his way through the secret lair of the Shadow. There are 32 rooms on two levels; each room is populated by assorted strange creatures: the Robo-droids, Spiral Drones and Snap-Jumpers, which will do their best to shoot down your Shamus. You have to be quick on the draw, and even quicker still to avoid their shots. At times they will wait in a small corridor, clustered in a





tight mass, and shoot relentlessly at your Shamus. If you take too long getting through a room, the Shadow (who is impervious to your Ion-Shiv) will get you.

To shoot (or shiv) the guardians of the lair requires you to hold down the fire button (which stops your Shamus from moving) and aim the joystick in the direction you want to toss the Shiv. With practice, you can learn to stop Shamus, fire, then retreat.

Scattered throughout the lair are question marks, which will either earn you a bonus, or a quick visit from the Shadow. There are also keys, which are guarded by the Shadow's helpers. In order to get into certain corridors, you must match the key to the keyhole.

Without actually playing the game, it is difficult to conceive how involved this contest is. A game this complex would be an impossibility for an Atari VCS, an Intellivision or an Odyssey. The key to this game (in the words of HES) is practice, practice, practice.

Shamus is an addicting one-player game, although HES recommends that you have a second player to keep track of your location in the lair. If you want a game that will keep you playing for hours on end, Shamus is for you.

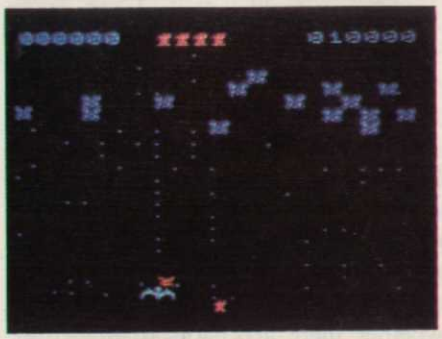
Slightly less accessible to most VIC-20 owners are the machine-language cassette-load games from Tronix. Since most VIC owners also own the Datasette, this isn't usually a problem. However, if you have a VIC and no recorder, you're out of luck.

Galactic Blitz (Tronix/VIC-20)

Galactic Blitz is a machine-language program (meaning that it plays fast), and is something like a cross between Galaxian and Gorf. In this game, your base is along the bottom of the screen. From the top come assorted attackers shaped like colored hearts, tomatoes, and other strange galactic garbage. These Blitzers spin off in a circular pattern, and then take on a life of their own. The more you play, the faster the attack becomes. The action in Galactic Blitz quickly becomes frantic. If you want a fast paced, Galaxian-like shoot-'em-up, you will probably like Galactic Blitz.

Swarm (Tronix/VIC-20)

Swarm is Tronix's other cassette-based offering for the unexpanded VIC-20 (no additional memory is required). The object of this Centipede-like game is to eliminate the swarm of creatures dropping down from above. Unlike Centipede, you don't have to worry about all those mushrooms messing up the



playfield. A spider-like creature darts around the bottom, and is worth different point values depending on how close he is to your shooter when he is hit. To make the game more of a challenge, another character (whatever it is) darts

slowly across the bottom of the playfield. In order to survive, you have to avoid both the bouncing "spider" and the slowly scrolling other critter. When you eliminate one swarm, the next swarm immediatly begins its atttack. Although the game play is reminiscent of that oft-copied insect attacker, you won't quickly tire of this game.

Swarm is a one-player game, with 40 levels of difficulty, ranging from playable to forget-it. All game controls are on the joystick, so you don't have to input anything onto your now-disabled keyboard. With all the difficulty levels and the challenging game play, Swarm is a good game.

Switching gears, we also have reviewed some games for the Texas Instruments computer, 99/4A. All games received so far have arrived on ROM carts (meaning that they require no tape loading or additional memory to play). In the future, a number of software manufacturers will be manufacturing tape-loading games, playable through expanded BASIC, which provides better graphic control for better games.

Blasto (Texas Instruments/TI-99/4A)

Having seen the miserable job most other manufacturers have done with the routine tank games, **Blasto** comes as a very pleasant surprise.

Blasto, a one- or two-player game, is one of the first efforts by Milton Bradley in programming for the TI computer. There are actually two games here. In the first, you must maneuver your tank through a minefield, shooting mines as you go and clearing a path. When you hit a mine, it explodes, taking those around it along in the explosion. You could conceivably eliminate 15 or 20 enemy mines with a single shot. If you are too close to an exploding mine, your tank goes up with it.

The overall concept may not sound like much fun, but it is. To increase the challenge, you have control over many of the variables: how many mines are scattered over the field (the more mines, the easier it is to clear a larger area); whether there are paths to maneuver (without a path, you have to blast your way through to clear ground); and the speed of your tank. The music is a very definite enhancement to game play, running the range from John Philip Sousa to George M. Cohan ("Yankee Doodle Dandy"), and even including a chorus of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." When the mines are exploding, the music unfortunately stops.

In the two-player version, the object is to blast as many mines as possible, in addition to blowing up your opponent. The second game is a rather routine tank maneuver, in which each player attempts to destroy the other without getting himself blown up. The rather simple playfield makes the task all the more challenging.

The ultimate challenge makes the tanks invisible while they are in motion. You may not know where your tank is until you stop it, but neither will your opponent. You can often end up right on top (or colliding with) the enemy tank, in this new twist to the old challenge. Overall it's an enjoyable game with the major attractions being amusement and entertainment.

Munch Man
(Texas Instruments/TI- 99/4A)

Munch Man is another version of everyone's favorite maze game. In this game, you have to move your muncher through a maze, laying down a chain.

When the entire screen is chained, you advance to the next level. At each corner is a blinking map of Texas (TI's logo). When you touch it, your four pursuers turn black, and are vulnerable to Munch Man's advances. The point value of each doubles (100, 200, 400, 800) as you eat them. Just before you run out of time, the screen flashes red to give you a warning.

At higher levels of play, the intervals when the pursuers are vulnerable become less and less. If you a) don't have an Atari computer, VCS or 5200, or b) don't want to buy a Pac-Man or Ms. Pac-Man cartridge, Munch Man is a reasonable facsimile. Be warned: Those stiff controllers *will* get you.

Hunt the Wumpus
(Texas Instruments/TI-99/4A)

We've seen the first trilingual game that we know of: **Hunt the Wumpus**. You can play this game in English, French or German, although the instructions are printed in English in the American version of the cartridge.

Hunt the Wumpus is a strategy game which feeds you several clues to locating a creature identified as a Wumpus. You start out somewhere inside of a maze; As you make a new step, more of the maze is revealed (unless you are playing in a "blindfolded" game). The clues you receive tell you that you are within two steps of the Wumpus, or within one step of the slime pits (don't fall into one of them), or if you have stumbled into a bat's cave. If you return to the cave, the bat may carry you off and drop you in another room—maybe even on the Wumpus himself.

Each round is apparently randomly generated, so memorizing patterns won't help. The key to finding the Wumpus is to go slowly (this isn't a speed contest), and think before you make that last step. When you think you've found him, you press the fire button, and aim the shot into the space you believe the Wumpus is hiding—if you're wrong, he'll get mad and get *you*.

Hunt the Wumpus gives you three difficulty levels (Easy, Hard and Pro mazes), and four options, from normal to blindfolded, to express and finally to blindfolded and express. Hunt the Wumpus is a challenging, enjoyable exercise in logical thinking. If you like brain games, this may be just right for you.

Tombstone City: 21st Century
(Texas Instruments/TI-99/4A)

Tombstone City: 21st Century is a strange strategy game for one player. Your schooner is in the center of a four-

by-four grid outside of which lies a futuristic desert landscape, with saguaro cacti, tumbleweeds, mountains (at the top of the screen) and the deadly green

morgs. As everyone knows, morgs are "generated" by adjacent cacti. If you blast a morg it becomes a cactus, capable of producing more morgs.

A morg can't enter your sage zone, but if you blast one directly outside, you cut off one exit (and entrance) by placing a cactus there. There are three levels of difficulty: Novice, Master and Insane. Try novice—it should take some time before you are ready to challenge Insanity.

Although I couldn't really get into shooting tumbleweeds, cacti and morgs, this is a game which should appeal to some strategy game fans. If you're not sure, try it at your nearest TI dealer (it's usually included in the demonstration package).

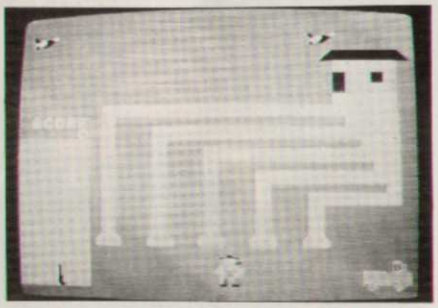
Henhouse (Funware/TI-99/4A)

Funware is, to our knowledge, the only company licensed to produce cartridges for the 99-4/A besides TI itself. Its **Henhouse** is an interesting, occasionally humorous game, the object of which is to transport eggs from your henhouse into a truck, scoring as many points as possible along the way. The henhouse is located at the top of the screen, and eggs drop seemingly at random into one of five chutes below it. When a chute is full, you must put down your gun and carry the eggs to the truck: any eggs going into an overfull chute end up broken. Six broken eggs and the game is over.

Henhouse is not just a game of scurrying back and forth emptying full chutes. In fact, the chutes fill slowly at first. You are instead occupied shooting ducks which fly overhead and a poacher who walks to your henhouse and makes off with your eggs one at a time. If he makes it all the way off the screen, you have lost another egg. Fortunately, he isn't too difficult to shoot, and you don't lose the egg until he is completely off-screen.

The greatest threat here is the black wolf. If he makes it to the henhouse, the game is over. Since you can't shoot ducks/poachers/wolves and catch eggs at the same time, as the game speeds up, you have to make quick decisions about whether to grab your gun and shoot those nasties intent on getting your eggs, or empty a full chute and avoid the loss of an egg. The game starts out very slow, but finally speeds up to the point where decisions are split-second, and game play is very fast.

At first, shooting a poacher and actually seeing him fall over dead (no Space Invader here) is rather amusing,



but the novelty wears off quickly and may be a bit much for small children ("It's only a tranquilizer dart, dear"). Similarly, the wolf falls on its back, in a very canine-like position. At least he doesn't yelp when he's shot.

Given the present limited number of software for this excellent graphics system, Funware is a welcome addition to the list of suppliers. Henhouse is an entertaining, fun game (at the faster levels) which, aside from the somewhat vivid violence can be easily played by adults and children, if you can stand the wait for things to speed up.

Parsec (Texas Instruments/TI-99/4A)

Parsec is probably the best of the games received for the TI-99/4A to date. The object here is to maneuver your spacecraft through a series of battles with enemy spacecrafts. If you survive the battles with the seven types of craft (which is no easy trick) you can attempt the tricky refueling maneuvers, in which you must carefully guide your craft through refueling tunnels. Surviving all that, you also must "blast a patch" through asteroid belts. Although the description of game play is simple, game play is *not*. I've seen the refueling depots and I've conquered most of the early waves of attackers, but I haven't yet successfully completed refueling or the run through the asteroids.

There are two features which really make Parsec a standout: graphics and voice. The graphics are excellent by current standards: The scrolling background is highly detailed, with no jagged lines in any of the visuals; behind you, stars twinkle against a black sky, and the explosions are worth losing a rocket just to see. When your ship gets hit, or runs into a stationary object, it explodes in what can only be described as something lifted directly from a Fourth-of-July fireworks display.

The use of voice further enhances the experience of Parsec. Human voices alert you to an approaching enemy, and remind you to refuel. Although they are an enhancement, the use of voice is not essential to game play, as it is, say, in Intellivoice games (which can't be played at all without voice). Although not essential, voice is an asset here, especially when compared to the Odyssey voice, which often says totally irrelevant things ("You turkey"; "Faster"). This game is completely playable without the voice enhancement since warnings appear at the bottom of the scrolling background.

At times the messages add insult to injury, explaining why your craft exploded ("Collision with ground," etc.). Parsec allows you three levels of game play (the game stays the same, maneuverability of your ship is the variable), and is a one-player contest. Parsec is a fine example of the graphics available to the 99/4A and is a must for the avid space gamer's library. ▲

SOFT SPOT

HOT SUMMER FUN
Home Carts Provide Some Rays of Hope

By Perry Greenberg

With the price of game systems and cartridges dropping, the summer months should be an exciting time for both game players and game makers. Students, off from school, will have more time to spend on their favorite recreation, while manufacturers will find it a prime time to move stagnant inventories by lowering prices as an incentive to lure time-wealthy gamers back into stores for new video challenges. Although it's too late for some companies to enjoy a resurgence in video game sales, since they've already "bought the farm," their demise has led to an abundance of riches for bargain-hunting players, with several games selling at a fraction of their original retail cost. Some of these efforts are superior to those produced by solvent companies that are selling for three or four times the price.

Coleco and Atari are still enjoying a monopoly on producing cartridges for their popular third generation systems; games which, while expensive, are, for the most part, worth their higher prices, presenting the player with the finest graphics, sound and play outside the arcade. Intellivision owners can also take heart with Intellivision II giving the budget-minded buyer the opportunity to play excellent games with superior graphics at a price far below what was imaginable a short time ago. With Mattel, Imagic, and Activision creating games for this system, no one can complain of a shortage of entertaining software. Odyssey continues to upgrade its system with better games while making final preparations on its soon-to-be-released third generation system. So although the stock market may look bleak for industry investors it's definitely a bullish time for players.

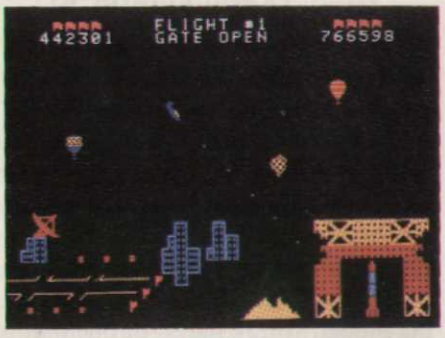
Looping (Coleco/ ColecoVision)

Looping, another excellent translation of an arcade hit for the ColecoVision, is unlike other fly-and-shoot games in which the control of the craft involves moving the joystick in eight directions. In Looping the joystick is moved in only two directions, forward and back, but in so doing you soar, dive and climb as if the plane were really suspended by air currents. The game is exhilarating as you make tight loop-de-loops while shooting and dodging explosive balloons that rise from the ground.

The action begins on the runway of what looks like a launching area complete with missiles. In the first series of screens the object is to shoot down as many balloons as possible, while avoiding lethal collision with them and surrounding buildings. If you're successful in hitting the standing missiles, a bell sounds indicating the gate is open at the far right side of the scrolling screen. This

gate leads into an intricate network of pipes: That's where you really get to test your ability as a barnstorming daredevil as you must traverse this dangerous course with your highly-maneuverable plane. It takes terrific reflexes and split-second timing to get through these pipes without crashing. If you hit the top of the screen in the launch area, your plane is harmlessly directed downward. However, in the Pipe maze, the same collision will result in a crash and the loss of one of your planes.

Operating the joystick in Looping takes some getting used to since when you pull back on the stick you're really pointing it downward, but at this angle you plane will actually soar. The opposite is, of course, true: when you push the stick forward your plane will dive.



In Looping you use both fire buttons. The left button fires the automatic cannon, and the right increases the plane's acceleration. Since you never run out of ammo, keep the fire button depressed and anticipate when the nose of the plane will be pointing in the direction of one of the soaring balloons. Don't use the acceleration button, however, when pursuing balloons because there's less control and your loops aren't as tight. But do use the button when you anticipate that your loop is on a collision course, in order to escape disaster.

Start the round with the joystick pulled back so you're quickly airborne, then level off. Stay in the free-flying launch area and destroy as many balloons as you can until the red ones appear. These are worth more points, but shooting one of the rocketing projectiles is a matter of luck, and chances are you won't last very long when they start dancing about the sky at supersonic speeds. At the first sight of them head towards the pipes, using your cannon as a guide to the opening, then proceed cautiously. Make quick tight moves and keep extra manuevering to a minimum, if at all possible, since its difficult to right the plane in the narrow tunnels created by the pipes.

When you get to the end of the maze you'll see a drop, leak out of one of the overhanging pipes. Try to shoot it for 500 points, but don't go after it if it means missing the next opening. More important than shooting the drop is hitting the Twinkle Monster, a star-shaped being that bobs around the opening before the outer room. If you can bump him off before you get there you're awarded 1000 points and you have a chance of making it through to the outer room. Even though it takes some terrific flying on your part to make it to this point, you're not home yet, as you must shoot, or dodge, fast-moving, deadly round balloons protecting the minute opening to the inner room where the flight ends. When you reach the end you go on to a tougher game and earn a bonus flight.

Looping is a terrific game that, while not unique in adopting a shoot-and-dodge format, does break new ground in playability, since there's no game that lets you soar and dive and loop your video aircraft the way this cart does. It not only provides a shoot-and-dodge scenario but also allows you to test your skills in the totally different video environment of the pipe maze. So you're really getting two terrific games in one, a bargain that's hard to pass up.

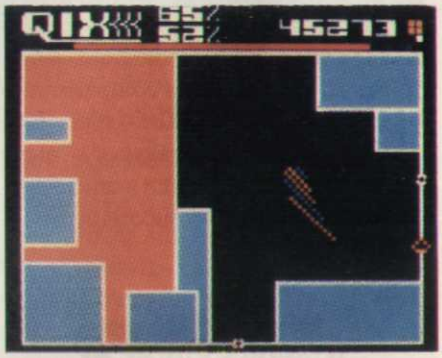
Qix (Atari/5200)

Qix deserves kudos for being one of the most unique video games ever created. It's so different that it doesn't fit into any established category: it's not a Space Invader, Pac-Man or Donkey Kong game. In fact, the only thing it remotely resembles is the old Etch-a-Sketch toy. I realize that may not evoke visions of exciting computerized confrontations, but **Qix** is an exciting, challenging and addicting game that's a must for owners of Atari's 5200. It's not only a challenging game, but it provides a medium that allows a player to express himself artistically. Unlike most games which tend to confine players to a narrow scope of specific activities for any success, Qix allows for an infinite variety of play moves. In fact, the game gives you so much leeway as far as moves are concerned, it at first appears deceptively easy. But as you play Qix you'll find it, surprisingly, getting the best of you unless you're a keen strategist and a quick thinker.

The object here is to capture territory on the screen by boxing in portions of it with a diamond-shaped marker that's controlled by the joystick and two fire buttons. Initially there are four antagonists thwarting your attempts at land grabbing with your main opponent being the Qix, a whirling multi-colored helix that dances around the screen. If the Qix touches any part of a stix or lane before that particular box is completed, you lose a life. Although you're safe from the Qix when you're on the screen border or a completed box, you're still vulnerable to its allies—two red and yellow sparx, which approach your marker from opposite directions. To avoid them you must quickly detour off the line you're on.

You advance to the next screen and claim points based on the amount of territory you have to capture and whether you've captured space with the slow or quick draw as you do in Taito's arcade original. The slow draw, which is activated by the top button, claims territory with a brown color worth twice the point value of any blue territory claimed by a fast draw.

Besides the Qix and sparx, you also have to be aware of fuses that ignite near



you when you stay too long in one spot. When the time line, indicated above the playing field, runs out you face two more sparx; if a second time line runs out you must then confront Super Sparx, a far more deadlier pursuer, which moves faster than its predecessors and hones in on your marker.

Qix can be played by one or two players. In the two-player mode both players go against the computer, alternating between rounds. There are many different levels to choose from, beginning with novice, in which you face a slow moving and not very bright Qix in an effort to

capture just 50 percent of the territory to expert level, where you try to garner 85 percent of the board while facing sparx, fuse, Super Sparx and a fast time line, not to mention a faster-moving Qix.

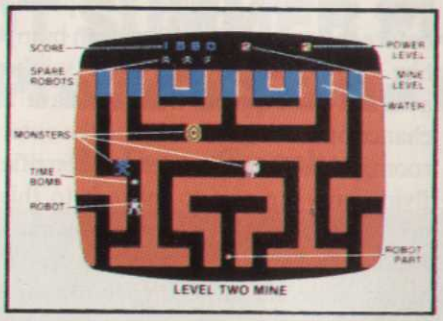
Try to capture as much territory as possible in each round since you earn 1000 times the percent of area captured that exceeds the game's threshold. The booklet that's included with the cartridge provides excellent strategies to employ when playing the game. But, since there's so much room for experimentation and improvisation, don't be afraid to construct strategies that may be more ingenious and indigenous to your style of play. Most strategies employ drawing narrow boxes that can quickly be completed to decrease the time you stix is exposed to the deadly touch of the Qix, while cutting off the amount of territory it has access to. Drawing large boxes will win the round sooner but you run the risk of losing your marker before you have a chance to complete one. In later rounds of the game, the Qix splits and you have two of them to worry about. Isolate one Qix from the other for bonus points. At all costs avoid the dreaded spiral death trap which occurs when you draw a spiral; in essence, it's like painting yourself into a corner, which will cost you a life.

This is one home version of an arcade hit which has lost nothing in the translation, except possibly the responsiveness of the arcade joystick in comparison to the much criticized 5200 joystick. But, considering that it's a game of strategy over quick reflexes, it's not a crucial factor in determining your success at this ingenious game.

Mines of Minos (Comma Vid/VCS)

If video games are meant to fulfill some sort of fantasy aspect of our imagination then Comma Vid's **Mines of Minos** is for the masochist in us. Here you're a robot protecting a mine composed of intricate maze-like tunnels from alien invaders bent on destroying you, ala the ghosts in Pac-man. Your goal is to find their control center and obliterate it. This is easier said than done since your robot has only one life, doesn't move very fast and has only one line of defense against his alien foes, which is to drop bombs in their path. In order to survive for long, it's imperative that you acquire additional lives, which you must build from robot parts which are scattered around the maze. When you gather a certain number of parts and transport them to the top center of the maze you earn an additional life.

To make matter even tougher, however, the mine begins filling up with water as you linger in it. Although your robot can't drown, he is slowed con-



LEVEL TWO MINE

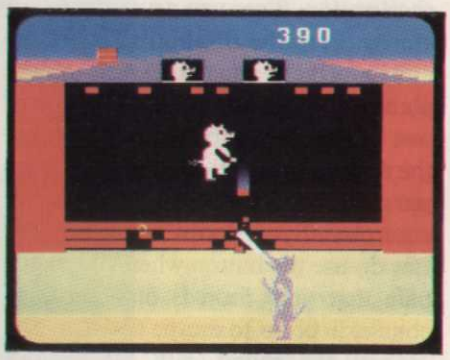
siderably and cannot drop mines when he's submerged. The idea is to score as many points as possible in the first series of mazes by destroying aliens while gathering spare parts for additional lives so your power level increases and you can advance to a higher level. At level 5 you can confront the power center, destroy it and win the game. Advancing to a higher level can be achieved by merely holding down the joystick button when moving through a connecting tunnel. The only problem with changing to a higher level prematurely is that if you haven't acquired enough points it takes two bombs to destroy the aliens making the game twice as tough.

Even at the easiest level, the "B" novice position, the game is extremely difficult and frustrating. There are just too many of those speedy killer aliens, and the mine fills with water so quickly that, when you're transporting robot parts to the top, you're vulnerable. As in Odyssey's Turtles (also reviewed this issue) your primary evasive action should be to back track over bombed adversaries, but here you must wait for the stricken alien to dissolve almost entirely before it's safe to do so. This delay is very costly as other aliens are always in hot pursuit while you're stuck waiting. The game booklet warns that if you stay at one level too long the aliens increase in number and speed, but if you move on to another level, without accumulating the appropriate power, you *still* don't stand a chance since it takes too many of those slow acting bombs to kill an alien.

So it's a case of damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't and damned if I want to be a robot stuck in a mine, anyway. The game sports a scrolling screen with intricate passages, but the two-dimensional graphics aren't very appealing and the sound effects tend to be annoying as the robot constantly makes a metallic clicking noise when he moves inside the maze. Although the game does have an interesting story line involving heroic robots, menacing aliens, time bombs and evil command centers, a good story does not a good game make as we've seen, for instance, with the failure of the E.T. video game. Minos is a planet I'd question the wisdom of visiting, much less accepting a job there in its subterranean mine shafts.

Oink! (Activision/VCS)

Oink! is a fatiguing, laborious game incorporating the story of the three little pigs as the game's scenario. The object is to have your Joystick-controlled Pig transport bricks from the top of the screen to the bottom, where the big bad you-know-what is waiting to blow away the rows of bricks. When the wolf blows away enough bricks he creates a chasm big enough to draw the pig through, with his breath. When he does this the pig exits the screen to the accompanying tune of "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad



Wolf?" The longer the pig survives, by bricking the chasm closed, the higher your score, with four points awarded for each brick successfully transported. The game ends when all three pigs make their exit.

All the action in this Activision game involves moving bricks, one at a time, from the top of the screen to the bottom where they're systematically blown away by the relentless computer-controlled wolf. Up and down your pigs go until all are symbolically eaten, making this game as exciting as a weekend in

Cleveland. The action is strenuously boring and might as well be played at the easier B level where, at least, you can drop the bricks from the top of the screen saving some wear and tear on your wrist.

The only saving grace of Oink! is that it provides some interesting head-to-head two-player competition where one player controls the wolf and the other the pigs. In this mode you and your human opponent can have some mindless fun as one player tries to knock away the bricks while the other replaces them. I must admit I did find the game mildly amusing as a two-player contest, but with one player it's no contest as the computer-controlled wolf quickly wears out your attention span and your wrist in this monotonous exercise.

Shark! Shark (Mattel/Intellivision)

For those of you who have been wavering over the dilemma of whether to buy an aquarium or a new video game, Mattel has come up with the perfect solution in **Shark! Shark!** It's a delightful game for budding ichthiologists who don't want the mess and bother of home aquariums, as well as video gamers who enjoy a colorful and challenging contest.

The object is to control a small, yellow, video fish which grows larger and garners points as it devours any marine animals smaller than itself. But, if it makes contact with a larger creature, it will be instantly consumed by it. Besides larger fish you must be on the lookout for sharks whose approach is preceeded by three ominous musical notes. Points can be earned by nibbling on the shark's tail and enough nibbles will cause him to bottom up. However, this is a perilous and daring way to increase your score since the shark can do a 180 degree turnaround in the blink of an eye and make a quick hor'doeure out of your fish.

Try to stay in the middle of the screen so you have room to evade larger fish. Don't get discouraged if after a few meals of smaller fish you don't seem to be getting any larger because your fish will take quantum leaps in size at certain gulps. You get an extra fish if you manage to kill a shark or eat a lobster or crab when they're smaller than you and descending to the bottom.

Besides the disc controller you can also use the side buttons to stop your fish from moving and the keypad buttons to dart quickly when you're in hot pursuit or dire straits. Beware of jelly fish, they're always lethal, and don't attempt

to eat fish that appear to be your size since they'll usually get the best of you.

You're given a choice of three game speeds, although you may want to try playing at the normal setting. Your fish moves at an adequate speed at this setting and the game is lively and challenging. At slower settings it can get tiresome since the movement of your fish is rather sluggish. Shark! Shark! has a two-player mode where you compete against another player who controls a small, red fish. It's an entertaining head-to-head contest similar to William's Joust, where you can devour your opponent's fish when it's smaller than yours or try to work together to rack up points. If you do turn around and gulp down your friendly adversary, your can then surge ahead of him since he must wait for you to lose a fish before he can return to the action.

Shark! Shark! on the surface, looks deceiving. At first glance it seems to be a midely amusing, slow-moving game, but its fish-eat-fish and survival-of-the-fittest in this visually well-appointed game, where the idea is to be a big fish on the little screen.

Rescue Terra 1 (Venturevision/VCS)

Venturevision, a new company to emerge on the video game scene, heralds its premiere cartridge, **Rescue Terra 1** as revolutionary software for VCS. Although the game breaks absolutely no new ground in game play or concept, this claim has some credence in that it's the first cartridge to sell for under $20. As competition gets stiffer, however, don't expect it to be the last.

The game booklet features an elaborate story line, leading to the objective of having to pilot a spacecraft some 40,000 light years while avoiding or destroying everything in your path until you reach your destination. A huge chart at the bottom of the screen keeps track of the number of shields you have left (out of the five you're given to start with), the light years remaining to your destination and the points you've accumulated, from successful kills. At various distances the game changes and you face different foes. From 40,000-30,000 light years your spaceship is at the top of the screen pointing downward at a constant barrage of meteors that you can either shoot with your laser cannon or dodge. At 30,000 the meteors are replaced by Space Pirates. The two types of Space Pirates encountered are far more dangerous than the meteors: one type can fire back while the other type is highly maneuverable and difficult to avoid colliding with.

At 20,000 light years the complexion of the game changes from a Space

Invader-type to a Defender-type as you now fly from side to side battling bobbing spacecrafts, called Robot Interceptors, which can fire and collide with your spacecraft causing you to lose one of your shields. Interceptors are streamlined and difficult to hit, with the saucer-shaped Interceptors having the ability to fire deadly photon bombs. If you survive their attack you move to the home stretch where you must battle Fish Force Fields, a thick wave of candy-cane-shaped objects that descend on your ship. You must shoot the hooked ends before the long staff-like part touches your ship.

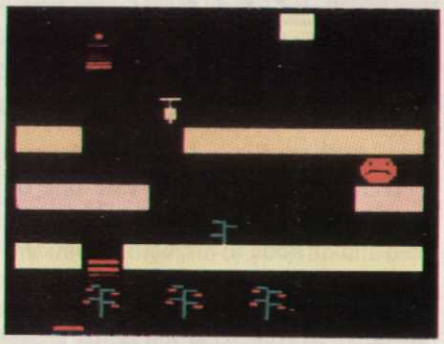
This is an ordinary looking VCS shoot'-em-up that has enough variation in play to make for a solid game of this genre. It allows players to choose any of the variatons as an entire game by choos-

ing different "missions" with the game selection switch. Although Rescue Terra 1 is priced considerably lower than many of its competitors, it looks and plays as well as many costlier games. If you're a VCS owner and have an extensive library of sci-fi shoot-and-dodge games you may already own carts that play tike it and the purchase of this cartridge would be entirely superfluous. However, if you're just starting your collecting, Rescue Terra 1 may be the bargain you've been waiting for.

Revenge of the Beefsteak Tomatoes (Fox Video Games/VCS)

For all of you out there complaining that too many video games look and play alike, Fox Video Games has released a game truly unique in concept. In fact, it may be *too* unique. The storyline here is that deadly tomatoes are rampantly growing in a vegetable patch and it's your job to stop them before they take over. You're armed with a multipurpose weed killer that you control via the joystick. What you must do with this device, which has more functions than a dozen Popel appliances, is shoot flying beefsteak tomatoes before they collide with your sprayer. You can shoot at cherry tomatoes (that wiz by the top of the screen dropping tomato bombs), and brick-eating weeds for points.

Bricks are your primarily concern because the object of the game is not really to destroy anything, but to wall in three indestructable missile-firing



tomato plants at the bottom of the screen. You do this by shooting bricks, which fly by at the top of the screen. When you shoot a brick, the color of one of the three walls you'e building across the bottom third of the screen, the sprayer turns the color of that brick. Turning the sprayer around and shooting it at the bottom of the screen places the brick in the appropriate wall.

Completing the first wall earns you 1,000 points: the second will result in 2,000 points and the third and last wall, gains 3,000 points. This is easier said than done because, although your sprayer fires automatically, you can only use a single shot to capture the brick, since a second shot will release it. Bricks are placed when the weed killer is fired in a vertical position. A horizontally-fired brick will simply be released. You cannot haphazardly build the walls either since it isn't possible to fire a brick for one wall through an existing one.

Wall-building requires some strategy, therefore, since a top wall cannot be completed until the wall below it is. To make things even tougher, when you've finally completed a wall it's constantly in jeopardy from "wall eating weeds" that must be destroyed by shooting at them before they grow to full size and eat a brick that you so painstakingly managed to place. Your tasks are many since you must shoot, dodge, capture, and strategically place your prizes. Fortunately, if you keep the difficulty switch on B you have a limitless supply of lives and, after losing a few dozen, you may finally complete all three walls. A game is hardly a game if you never lose, so eventually you must put the difficulty switch on A which affords you three lives or sprayers. Now that you have only three lives, you've got a snowball's chance in hell for completing three walls.

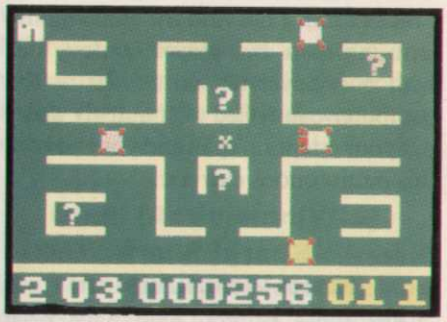
A typical jaded video game player certainly can't complain that there's not enough to do in this cart. The activity is diverse enough to allay any grumbling about the action being redundant, but the game is a wacky exercise that just doesn't make much sense. The graphics are as unappealing as the game play and there's very little incentive to come back for more unless you're really into walling in tomato plants.

Turtles (Odyssey)

The latest entry in Odyssey's voice-enhanced series of games, **Turtles**, is an excellent translation of the moderately successful arcade game from Stern which was licensed through Konami. This challenging maze game is a Pac-man derivative with enough novelties of its own to ward off the type of litigation that destroyed its sister cartridge K.C. Munckin.

The object here is to guide a joystick-controlled turtle along a maze representing a floor of the Turtle Hotel. The floor has six rooms, or boxes, each containing a question mark, five of which will turn into a baby turtle who on contact will immediately hop on your turtles' back. His emergence is accompanied by the appearance of a little houselike figure in another part of the maze. Your mission is to guide the turtles with its passenger to the house, where the baby turtle is dropped off. Each successful drop is worth a total of 250 points: 100 for making contact with a baby turtle, 150 for the drop.

While you're rescuing baby turtles,



you're also being pursued by stop sign-shaped beetles. Making contact with a beetle will cost you one of your four turtles. You can't turn the table on the beetles by swallowing an energy capsule, ala Pac-Man, but your turtle isn't entirely defenseless, either. He is armed with three bug bombs which are activated by pressing the red fire button. When a beetle makes contact with a bomb he is momentarily immobilized and rendered harmless and you get 50 points. Frequently an "X" will appear in the middle of the screen. If your turtle touches one of these Xs he picks up three additional bug bombs. (A turtle can carry up to 99 bombs.) When you've rescued all five baby turtles you proceed to the next harder floor of the hotel.

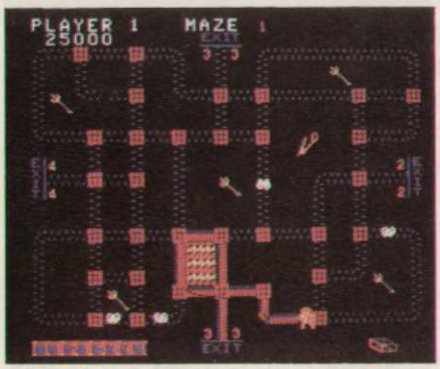
The game is a challenging one because, not only are the beetles slightly faster than your turtles, who moves pretty rapidly considering the nature of the beasts, but, as the game progresses, the beetles become more ruthless and cunning in their pursuit. When the beetles change from green to red they no longer move randomly but pursue your turtles with zealous precision. Strategy, more than split-second reflexes, is needed for success. Accumulate as many bug bombs as you can—without them your turtle is defenseless and will last as long as a novice's quarter in Robotron. Always approach the room closest to your turtle, since the longer it takes you to

rescue the baby turtle the smaller your chances of survival. When you reach a room with a question mark touch it cautiously and make a hasty exit if need be, because one of the marks will turn into a deadly beetle. The best way to utilize a bug bomb is to place it right behind you, wait for the beetle to touch it, then reverse direction and move over the stunned beetle. This evasive action will confuse your pursuers and save a life.

Turtles is a very challenging game that requires a necessary degree of concentration, and split-second decisions for any appreciable success. It's the toughest game so far from Odyssey and possibly their best maze game, although the use of speech and sound effects really haven't been as integrated and utilized as they could be.

Pepper II (Coleco/ColecoVision)

With Parker Bros. having already acquired the rights to Amidar, Coleco did the next best thing by licensing **Pepper II** from Exidy. As in Amidar your joystick-controlled creature must zip around the tracks of a maze, closing off and filling in boxes of the maze for points. Zip is the key word for the action in this game since the tracks are open zippers that your Pepper Angel must zip closed. Each time he closes a box you're awarded points. Pursuing Pepper is a group of slower, randomly-moving "roaming eyes." There are five in all, making them formidable foes, especially when two are closing in on the same track or zipper. Also to be outwitted is their speedy and treacherous ally, the Zipper Ripper. He's as fast as Pepper



and will undo any zippers of uncompleted boxes he passes over. Pepper can also do the same if you move him so that he backtracks over uncompleted boxes. This shouldn't be seen as a standard strategy, but rather a necessary evil, if you're otherwise trapped.

The idea of the game is to completely box in the four mazes of each round before you use up all of Pepper's lives. Each maze provides easy access to adjoining mazes by a connecting track on each of the four sides of the screen. Connecting tracks are labeled indicating which maze they will lead to. This freedom of movement means that you don't have to finish off one maze before moving on to the next, although this too is a viable strategy. You're awarded 7000 bonus points for each completed maze, with the best tactic possibly being to roam from maze to maze trying to enclose as much of each before your pursuers become overwhelming. Each maze has five boxes containing pitchforks. If you envelope one of these pitchfork-containing boxes, you can momentarily turn the table on the eyes much as you do the ghosts in Pac-Man. During this brief interval where Pepper becomes an invinceable "devil," the Zipper Ripper becomes immobile and you can pass right through him. If you close an area that has a "magic box" in it, Pepper becomes a devil again and the Zipper Ripper quits the maze for a short time. There are also some rooms containing bonus prizes where you can score 910 points times the number of bonus prizes you've earned in the game.

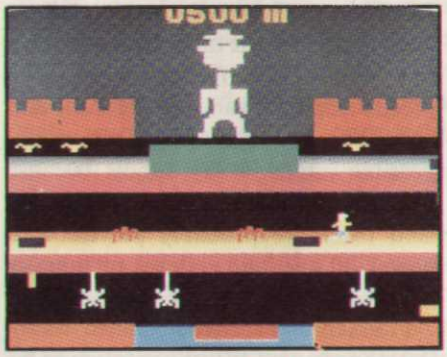
Don't save pitchforked rooms for last, as you might do with power capsules in Pac-man. Instead, go over them as quickly as possible and try to formulate pattens to close as many boxes as you can during the short time you're a devil. You do earn points for catching eyes when you're a devil but your primarily concern should be finishing the maze. Use your exits to other mazes often, since the eyes must pursue you from maze and to maze and, initially, will still be in another maze when you enter a different one. It doesn't take very long for your pursuers to find you again, but in those few seconds you can cover a great deal of territory. When you leave a maze, zipped tracks of uncompleted boxes are unzipped again but when you re-enter you have time to re-zip them before all the eyes find you.

When you finish all four mazes you go on to the next tougher round where the tracks disappear and reappear suddenly. But here, using your memory, if you enclose a "magic box" room all the eyes will leave the maze and so will the Zipper Ripper.

Pepper II is another excellent translation of an Exidy arcade game that complements Coleco's other hits of this genre such as Mouse Trap and Lady Bug. Pepper II is a nice variation on those maze and chase games since it gives the player the added dimension of playing on four mazes at once. Pepper moves with lightning speed and the joystick is very responsive in this game as Pepper makes his way around tight intersections. The graphics are the usual excellent visuals we've begun to expect from Coleco but here they're coupled with terrific sound effects beginning with the theme from the old Alfred Hitchcock show and culminating with "Happy Days are Here Again" when all four mazes are completed.

Frankenstein's Monster (Data Age/VCS)

Data-Age, a company that has recently "Journeyed" to bankruptcy court, made a valiant effort to capture its share



of the video game pie. **Frankenstein's Monster** is the company's most colorful attempt yet in attracting the vast audience of jump-and-climb game players who can't get enough of Donkey Kong derivatives.

In this VCS game, you're an intrepid monster fighter who must stop Frankenstein's monster from being unleashed. The only way to stop the indestructable creature is to make a trip from the top of the castle to the bottom, gathering stones and then transporting them to the top and wall old Frankie in. You start with 500 points and a limited time span.

The trip is a hazardous one, loaded with perilous ghosts, tarantulas and spiders whose touch will immobilize you and rob you of points and time. Your object is to get to the bottom floor via openings which contain ropes to lower yourself with. Once you touch bottom

the worst is still ahead as you must leap over an acid moat on to a tiny island and then repeat this leap to get to the stones. The difficulty in making these leaps is compounded by video spiders that frequently lower themselves from the top of that floor. If you're touched by one as you're jumping it will interfere with your momentum causing you to fall into the acid and not only lose a life but also 200 points. Touching the other creatures causes a loss of 20 points and falling through a trap door is a 100-point penalty.

Once you've successfully completed the mission you're awarded 500 points and proceed to the next screen where you begin at the bottom and try to work your way to the top. A swarm of vampire bats push you back to the bottom when you make contact with them. (This screen is remarkably reminiscent of the Journey Escape game and makes one wonder if Data Age was trying to get more mileage out of the concept.) If you survive, you proceed to the third screen which is similar to the first, only far tougher. When you reach bottom on this level you must jump over the moat and onto three tiny islands. Each island requires a precise leap to advance to the stone and bring it back: a total of eight almost impossible jumps. I say almost because somewhere out there in video gaming land there are probably players with nerves of steel and reflexes of impalas who can accomplish this awesome feat.

Frankenstein's Monster, like many Date Age games, is just too tough to be played with any satisfaction by the average game player. Data Age should have made extended use of the difficulty switch of the VCS in its game programs. They don't and the results are games that at first seem intriguing but are soon discarded for their lack of sustained interest.

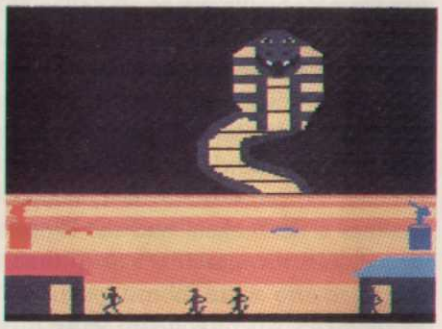
Frankenstein's Monster is a colorful game incorporating the horror film scenario that seems to be getting more popular, (witness the arrival of Imagic's Dracula, Sega's Monster Bash and E.E.L.'s Vampire). Unfortunately, this game is an example of not too little too late, but too much too late for Data Age.

A tip for getting through the first round: jump over the first trap door you encounter on the middle floor, then turn around and fall through it. True, you'll lose 100 points but you'll land on the end of the island and save time and a jump.

G.I. Joe Cobra Strike (Parker Bros./VCS)

Parker Bros. **G.I. Joe Cobra Strike** game has one thing going for it: a spectacular graphic representation of a cobra that absolutely dominates the screen. Unfortunately it looks far better than it plays. The idea of this VCS game is to protect an endless column of soldiers as they automatically march from one end of the screen to the other. Hovering over them is the Cobra which constantly bobs back and forth, randomly drooling video venom over them. Your job is to move a paddle-controlled shield above them from side to side to catch the venom before it hits one of the soldiers. Four hits and it's back to the reset button.

There are two cannons on the left and right sides of the screen. In the A difficulty mode either cannon is activated by moving the shield to it. When the shield is touching the cannon you can fire a projectile that can be directed to the cobra via the paddle controller. The idea is to hit the eyes of the cobra which is the only vulnerable part of the insideous serpent. Eight hits and the cobra takes a powder and you're awarded 1,000 points. If you concentrate too much on hitting the cobra, however, you run the risk of leaving your men unprotected and it won't take long before four of them get their venom shower. If, on the other hand, you just move the shield back and forth you'll only rack up 10 points per man and never get the satisfaction of seeing that cobra get his just reward. So look for a technique that allows you a happy medium of shooting and protecting.



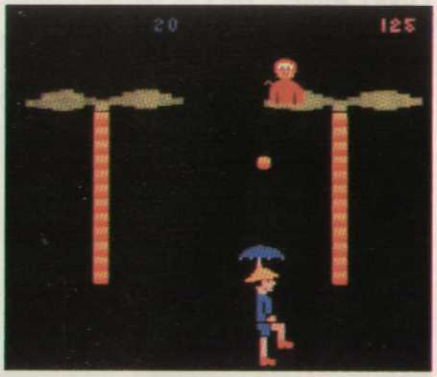
The game allows for two two-player modes. In one version one player fires while the other controls the shield, which seems to make a great deal of sense. In a second, competitive mode, one player controls the cobra using the buttons to emit venom and the joystick to move the cobra back and forth and to activate its laser eyes. There's even a three-player mode in which two players control the shields and the gun turrets to battle a third who controls the cobra. Even though I found it more satisfying to control the cobra, the only satisfaction in playing the heavy is to end the game as quickly as possible, since no points are awarded to the cobra in any of the games.

As a one-player game I found that this cart doesn't sustain much interest where you're principly only moving that unresponsive shield back and forth, despite the appeal of the cobra. It may work as a two-player game and even better as a three-player game. In fact, this may be the ideal gift for a family of triplets or at least someone with a split personality.

Fast Food (Telesy/VCS) Coconuts (Telesy/VCS) Stargunner (Telesy/VCS)

Telesys, a company that's a relative newcomer to the VCS software scene, is coming on strong with a host of cartridges. However, quantity, not quality, seems to be its credo. Some of their games are so elementary and simplistic in design, graphics and play that, while they may suffice for the very young, they are totally divorced from what the sophisticated gamer has come to expect in a home cart.

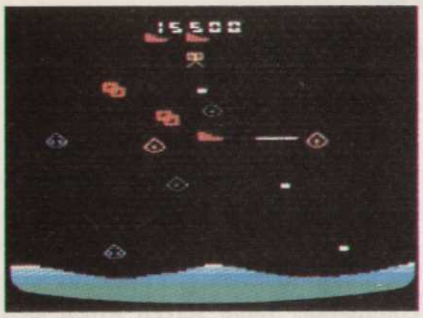
One of its most recent entries, **Coconuts,** has got to be its worst. The entire game consists of a chimp leaping between two trees dropping video coconuts on a player-controlled man on the ground below. You move the man



back and forth to avoid getting clobbered and that's it. Three bonks and you're out. In later rounds, the action does speed up but why stick around for it to do so? Coconuts is what you'd have to be to get off on this game.

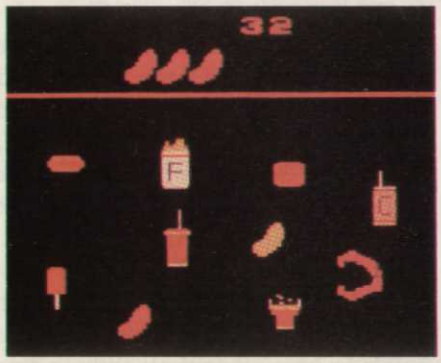
Stargunner is a stripped-down

Defender which proves that, in some cases, less can be worse. The player controls a laser-firing ship flying over a barren, mountainous landscape, blasting objects that appear on the scene for points. Above the action is a stick-figure who is untouchable and showers bombs



on your ship that you must dodge as you blast your way through the objects in range of your fire. It's Defender with not much to defend. The game does make use of the difficulty switch by limiting the mobility of your ship, since when you put the switch on A, you can only fire in one direction. However, it's not only tougher, but also duller. So keep the switch on B.

Fast Foods is a mazeless gobble game with cute graphics. You control a pair of jaws and devour palatably well-drawn



video representatives of fast foods for points while avoiding consumption of purple pickles. Devouring five purple pickles will give you indigestion and the game will end when the screen turns blue and the word "burp" appears. The only interlude in the redundant play is that, during play, the screen turns blue and the words "you're getting fatter" appear. A gobble game without a maze, ghost or power dots is a game without any substance. Alas, Fast Foods only whets the appetite and left me hungry for a lot more.

Escape from the Mindmaster (Starpath/VCS)

Last year, Starpath Corp. introduced the Supercharger, an expansion module for the Atari VCS that increases screen resolution and game memory, bringing the seemingly antiquated Atari into league with Intellivision and ColecoVision. It also saves home gamers a few dollars by including an audio interface permitting game programs to be sold on inexpensive cassettes.

Along with the Supercharger, Starpath released its first game titles: *Phaser Patrol,* a graphically enhanced version of *Star Raiders; Communist Mutants from Space,* a *Galaxian/Demon Attack*-style dodge-and-shoot game; *Fireball,* a souped-up *Super Breakout;* and *Suicide Mission,* a medically themed version of *Asteroids*. all are clones of games that many VCS owners already possess. Happily, the designers over at Starpath must have been aware of the lack or originality in their initial catalogue. The next batch of game released, which includes *Escape from the MindMaster*, exhibits more creativity in both graphic design and game play.

Escape from the MindMaster has a plot that's pure space paranoia: you are spirited away late one night by an alien being whose favorite hobby is to collect specimens from various planets for testing on his home world. You, as human guinea pig, are forced to run through a giant six-level maze where a series of pegs has been randomly scattered. Seeing the maze as if you were actually standing within the winding corridors, you must gather the pegs one at a time, search the maze for their corresponding slot, and insert the pegs into the slots. Inserting all of the pegs unlocks a door that will lead you to the next level of the maze. Completing the task quickly nets you the greatest number of points.

This may sound simple enough, but, some of the corridors have sliding force fields which must be circumvented. Others are patrolled by a mean little alien who must be avoided. In your wanderings, you're also very likely to stumble upon a series of mini-games that must be played for bonus points. Not intimidated? Okay, as you progress from level to level, the shapes the pegs change from simple geometric forms to elaborate twisted designs guaranteed to tax even the sharpest of memories. Simple doorways become one-way entrances. Certain corridors have so many force fields that, after you have successfully negotiated the distance from one end to the other, you might find yourself huffing and puffing as if you had physically run the gauntlet.

Put all of the elements together, and you have one very well designed game. Taking advantage of the Supercharger's ability to load progressive difficulty levels via the tape cassette, rather than being limited to the capabilities of a standard game cartridge, the folks at Starpath have managed to create a game that remains challenging from screen to screen. The graphics are marvelous, with a convincing illusion of depth and perspective that successfully simulates the feeling of actually moving through the corridors. Joystick control is simple and straightforward, while the designers have even been kind enough to provide a radar map and direction indicator at the bottom of the screen, to reduce confusion.

There are problems, however, beginning with the fact that the only variations in game play include your ability to either change the speed of the alien stalker from slow to fast, or to reduce your number of "chances" (read "lives") from nine to five. The instructions are woefully inadequate concerning playing mechanics of the various mini-games. (one plays like a video version of Simon another apes the classic Lunar Lander setup, while a third could serve as a training mission for the meteor screen of Cosmic Ark. It seems that Starpath's designers are content to fall back into old habits, leading one to wonder why they don't just come out with a game called Attack of the Arcade Clones and get it over with?

Fans of action games may find Escape from the MindMaster a little disappointing. For all of its action elements, it is really a memory/puzzle game. Nevertheless, it is more than a little addictive. With well-conceived visuals and game play, Escape is an original.

—Dan Persons

SMALL WONDERS
The Downsizing of Video Games

By Anne Krueger

If you've been waiting for your favorite video game to shrink and appear in a more compact and portable format, a la the hand held calculator, your wait is over. It's no longer necessary to own a wheelbarrow or handcart in order to take a reasonable facsimile of electronic fun with you, or to shuttle a game from room to room. Likewise, access to the family television isn't a must when using any of the plethora of handheld, self-contained or portable games now on the market.

However, manufacturers don't expect these smaller games to replace your more sophisticated home video game or computer system. In fact, many of the same people who brought you at-home game cartridges, systems and arcade fun —Nintendo, Tiger, Mattel and Coleco— are in the mini- and standalone game business as well.

So, if you've heard rumors the mini-portable game market is on the rocks, take a gander at the following new offerings. And just you wait and see if the sounds you may hear on the beach this summer may be the familiar *wocka, wocka, wocka* and *blippity-bleep* of portable video games.

Mini-Handhelds with Multi Functions:

Almost every shirt pocket, desk drawer, knapsack and purse these days seems to house a miniature calculator somewhere in its depths. Now, for those who want even more functions in the same small space, PM Industries' Game Clocks package a calculator along with a clock and an alarm in a palm-size game.

Less than 3/8" deep and measuring 4¼" by 2½", the games feature 19 black and white calculator keys, a botton for mode selection (game, time, alarm, calculator), as well as forward and up and down directional buttons. *VIDEO GAMES* took a closer look at two PM calculator handhelds: Thief in Garden and Space Strike-Back. On both

units it's possible to add, subtract, multiply and divide with totals of up to eight digits. They also feature easy-to-set alarms and clocks and indicate the passage of seconds.

Thief In Garden is housed in neon-orange plastic and pits you, the thief, against dogs and policemen. The clever robber has just stolen a bag full of jewelry and money from a millionaire's home and must escape through the garden and back fence.

A little blipping musical ditty accompanies the thief's exit (unless you wish to silence it by pushing the calculator key with musical notes on it). The player must guide the thief by weaving him around the dogs and policemen via the forward, up and down directional buttons. For each step forward, the player scores one point; five points are awarded each time he escapes through the gate. This thief has three lives before the game is over. (Note: the captors move in fairly quickly, but the clever thief can find a "shelter spot" on his way out where he can safely bide his time until the path clears.)

In **Space Strike-Back,** the player uses the forward, up-and-down directional buttons to protect a master space carrier commander craft from an attack by missile bombs. What the player sees on the handheld screen is a minature space commander radar screen which alerts him to the missile attacks via black blips on the screen and a bleeping alarm.

The object is to control the laser anti-missile gun (indicated by a little firing base on the right side of the radar screen) and strike back from five different latitudes. This involves a great amont of harried up and down motion as well as frantic firing while the annoying blips steadily advance. Each time the game mode is selected, the previous high score is displayed. Another musical tune identifies the end of the game when you've been attacked three times.

Other PM Industries' handheld Game Clock games are a little smaller and don't offer the calculator functions. In the green jungle-colored **Spider** game, you're an explorer who must sneak across a river on stepping stones to save the natives trapped in the spider's web.

Unfortuantely, the spider lurks nearby and uses its many legs or sticky-web spit to stop you. In addition, once you safely get across the river to the web, you

photos by R.P. Selcik

won't succeed in freeing many natives until a tiny boat appears on the screen in the river. At that time, natives can jump into the rescue boat earning you three points a piece. Only 10 natives can be saved per trip. You earn 15 bonus points if you manage to get all 10 consecutive natives into the boat, and earn another two points if you manage to pass the spider unscathed on your way back to the jeep. The game ends after the spider has snared the explorer three times. Spider also features a clock and alarm function.

In the simple **Goalkeeper** game, balls are shot randomly at the goal from five different directions. It's the goalkeeper's task to kick away the balls which approach at increasing speeds. When three balls get by, the game ends. One point is scored each time the goalkeeper kicks a ball successfully. Goalkeeper features a clock but no alarm capability.

In both Goalkeeper and Spider, three buttons are used to select the time function, game A or game B. In all PM Industries' games, the game B selection is a slightly more difficult version of game A. To set the time and alarm function on any of the handhelds, the user simply depresses the spot marked ACL or ALM with a ballpoint pen or other pointed instrument and uses the directional buttons to select the correct hour and minute. All games feature a built-in stand which frees both hands for play.

Dual-screen Donkey Kong:

Also producing sophisticated game and clock duos for the handheld scene is Nintendo, the revered coin-op company. The company's pocketsize **Donkey Kong Game & Watch** is just one of its many dual-screen offerings. Housed in a snazzy 2½" by 4½" silver and orange case which opens and closes like a compact, Nintendo's Donkey Kong offers hours of take-along fun along with its clock and alarm functions.

In this version, Donkey Kong has captured the damsel and carried her to yet another under-construction building. Mario attempts to follow them up girders and two ladders, avoiding Donkey Kong's well-aimed barrels along the way.

The Nintendo case is designed to open in such a way that both game screens can comfortably be viewed at the same time. A four-directional controller (which resembles the American Red Cross symbol) sends your old friend Mario the carpenter forward, backwards, up and down, in his quest. Unlike some of the other Donkey Kong versions, in this game Mario can't jump the barrels anywhere along the girder that he pleases; he must watch out for low, overhanging girders in some spots. Jumping there will eliminate one of the player's three Marios, as will running into any of the barrels.

The game's round jump button is used to begin the game. Three other buttons—Game A, Game B and Time—are used to select those functions. Game B is a harder version of Game A and requires more coordination, technique and timing.

For every barrel Mario leaps over on the lower girder, one point is scored. When Mario reaches the second girder, two points are earned for each barrel leaped. At the top of the second girder, Mario climbs up a ladder to the second screen.

At this point, the control button must be pushed to the left enabling Mario to turn on the crane switch. Then he must avoid Donkey Kong's numerous deadly barrels and wait until the crane hook is far to the left before he leaps to catch it. If your timing is off in this endeavor. Mario will plummet to the ground and will have to begin again at the bottom of the first screen. If he successfully grabs the crane hook, it will swing up to cut on one the four wires holding the beam where Donkey Kong is standing. After each cut, points are awarded according to the amount of time it took Mario to get up there. Four cuts tumbles Donkey Kong and earns you 20 points, and Mario then must begin at the bottom with an added hurdle. Moving black overhead girders now appear sporadically making it harder and harder for Mario to find a save place to jump the barrels.

When the score reaches 300 points, a fanfare will sound and one more Mario is restored to the bullpen. If there are no misses (no dead Marios) when 300 points are earned, the game goes into what is called "chance time" and all points are awarded at double value until Mario makes a mistake and is eliminated.

Take Jaws to the beach:

One of Technotel's new lineup of palm-size POP games, perfect for the beach this summer, is **Jaws.** This slim ocean-blue unit features a watch, alarm and stop watch function.

You're in control of a man fishing on a small island in this game. Every now and then a shark (Jaws!) will appear from the left or right and will try to eat the man. Your job is to move him from the right to left, or up a handy coconut tree, to avoid the shark's attack. You earn points by waiting until a sailboat approaches the island and stays there four seconds. At that time you can begin to shoot coconuts into the boat at two points a shot. A six-point bonus score is awarded if you shoot a coconut into the boat when dolphins appear.

The perfect take-along to the beach this summer is the pocket-sized game called *Jaws*.

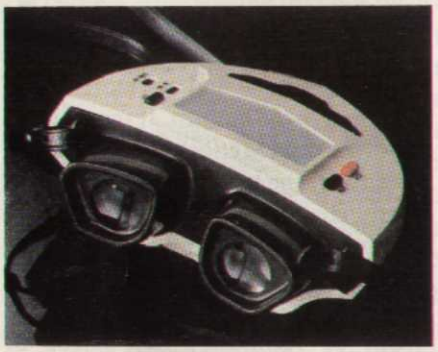
You can't make the man move or climb the tree when he is sitting down fishing. You also can't shoot a coconut when the shark approaches the man or when the boat is too far away—these all are counted as errors, as is (obviously) being eaten by the shark. Five errors and the game is over.

Four game play buttons are used to

activate the time, alarm and stop watch settings and are also used to move the man around the island. A built-in rear table stand frees both hands for game play.

Binocular-style car racing:

Those who like car racing and want their game to go with them can purchase Tomy's **Tomtronic Thundering Turbo** game. It's one of the company's three



3-D binocular-styled units which reduce peripheral vision and can be transported around your neck instead of in your shirt pocket.

Both hands are required to hold the unit up to the player's eyes. The game works best when a strong light source comes from above to illuminate the 3-D color action inside the binoculars. The buttons are designed simply so the player can use them without looking at them —a wise move since it's irresponsible driving to take your eyes off the road.

On/off and sound-off switches are located along the top of the game. The sound-off button allows the user to turn off the raucous racing noises: A lawnmower-like noise gets faster as the driver accelerates, an alarming series of beeps indicates a crash (you're allowed three crashes), and a blipping keeps track of the score as your pass cars or they pass you.

A button on the left side of the top of the binoculars moves the car across the three lines to the left; a button on the right side moves the car to the right. Above that, a red button controls the acceleration of the car.

Once turned on, a racing tune and a 3-2-1-0 beep indicates you're off! The game is a race against time as well as against the lightning fast "jam cars." The driver uses the accelerator button to increase his speed and earns points by weaving past the jam cars. Six colored lights on the fence warn when the time is almost up. After each crash, the number of cars you have left appears at the bottom of the screen and the next race begins. After three wrecks, or when time runs out, you're through. Each game consists of three races lasting about 100 seconds each. Points scored (you earn one point for each car you pass; lose one point for each car that passes you) appear at the lower left of the screen and a crash sends your car realistically spinning upside down across the three lanes and into oblivion. Pressing the accelerator button will begin a new game. Skill levels in Thundering Turbo increase after each race is completed, and each game gets progressively more difficult. In all races, the jam cars move slowly in the right lane and at moderate speed in the middle lane. If you really want to be on the fast track, the left lane is the place for you. The game requires three double AA batteries which aren't included.

Standalones duplicate arcade fun:

Tiger's Electronic Mini Arcade King Kong and Coleco's Ms. Pac-Man are standalones small enough to carry under your arm or stuff into a back-pack. Both run on four "C" batteries and have adaptors available for plug-in play and offer one- and two-player options.

Coleco's **Ms. Pac-Man** features the bowed darling you've learned to know and love in the arcade. The game is playable by young kids since it requires only one hand to move the four-directional joystick. Players choose from two skill levels and move Ms. Pac-Man through eight different intricate mazes in her quest for dots, power capsules and colorful bonus fruit (the fruit shows up at the top; what Ms. Pac-Man is really pursuing in the maze is a flickering dot.) When two players go at it at once, they're playing together against the gobbling monsters. The best previous score shows up at the end of each game. The game, which is accompanied by typical Pac-Man type musical tones, is the newest addition to this company's very successful line-up of standalones.

King Kong from Tiger has you taking the part of a fireman trying to rescue Penelope from King Kong. The machine's joystick controller is used to

maneuver the fireman up the ladders. A jump button puts the fireman into action leaping bombs and grabbing bonus axes to accumulate the highest possible score. Reaching the top and saving Penelope scores 30 points the first time, 40 the second time and 50 points each time after that. But when the fireman gets bombed three times, the game ends.

As with other games of this type, the fireman won't jump unless he's moving. He must climb five levels in all, while destroying the offending bombs with the axes, instead of jumping over them, scores 10 points each. A "saving Penelope" melody is played when the fireman reaches the top and King Kong falls to the ground.

As players become more adept at the game, they can increase the skill level from one to four. Easy-to-understand buttons at the base of the game operate and on/off switch; function button, which chooses the game mode (demonstration, skill level, play and reset); skill level choice button, which doubles as the jump button; and one- or two-player switch. ▲

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HARD SELL

Texas Instruments' 99/4A: A Little Goes A Long Way

By Mark Andrews

Down in the Lone Star State, they do things in a big way. Witness the Astrodome, the Dallas Cowboys, the National Space Center and the TI-99/4A.

The TI-99/4A?

On the surface the TI-99/4A doesn't look like it would size up to be a Texas Computer, since it's only 15″ wide x 10¼″ deep by 2¾″ high. Even the price is small—less than $150, when factory rebates are figured in. But the TI-99/4A is the fastest computer in the West, thanks to its 16-bit chip. There are also some other reasons why this is a definite lone star sensation. To start with, what you see when you look at the 4A is not necessarily all you get. It might look puny, but once you get hooked on it and start adding accessories, a TI-99/4A *system* can grow to quite an impressive size.

One popular 99/4A accessory is a small (5¼″ x 2¼″) voice synthesizer that plugs into the computer's right-hand side panel. With a speech synthesizer, you can add lifelike voices to some of the newest games in the 99/4A's software catalog—and you can also write programs with voice comments built right in.

If you're a game enthusiast, you'll probably want to equip your 99/4A with TI's joystick controllers, which are connected to the computer through a port on the left-hand side panel.

On its back panel, 99/4A has a DIN jack which can be connected to the audio and video inputs of a color or black-and-white video monitor. A cord designed to make the connection comes with the computer. To hook the 99/4A up to an ordinary TV set, a special accessory, called an RF modulator, is required. Over the past few months, TI has been providing 99/4A customers with modulators at no charge. There are two other connections on the 99/4A's back panel: one for the power cord supplied with the computer, and one for a cassette recorder.

Almost any ordinary audio cassette recorder can be used as a data storage device for the 99/4A, but a special inter-

facing cable is needed. No special cable is necessary, however, to hook the computer up to a new program recorder recently designed for the 99/4A and now available from TI.

To equip the 99/4A with most other accessories, a special peripheral expansion box manufactured by TI is required. This module is bigger than the computer itself and more expensive,too. It measures 17½" wide x 7½" high x 1½" deep, and retails for a suggested $180. The expansion module contains a slot for a disk drive (list price $465), plus smaller slots for either one or two 32K memory expanders ($220 each), an RS-232 serial interface (free when you buy a $530 dot-matrix printer), and a disk controller card (which comes with the disk drive).

A telephone modem for the 99/4A is also available. It plugs into the same serial interface card that handles the printer. Add all of that equipment to a 99/4A, and you've got a very powerful—and pretty expensive—home computer system.

Good News, Bad News

The components inside the 99/4A are also impressive, including the central TMS-9900 microprocessor and a 16-bit chip designed and manufactured by TI. So the 99/4A, like the IBM PC, really is a 16-bit computer—not an 8-bit computer like most other popular personal computers, such as the Apple IIe, Commodore's VIC-20 and models 64 and Atari's 400/800 and 1200XL. Because the 99/4A is a 16-bit computer, it can hold much more data in its memory than most of its competitors, and can also perform calculations faster than they can. The 99/4A also has a host of other outstanding features. But, like all computers, it does have some shortcomings.

The sound and graphics capabilities of the 99/4A are superb, and the TI voice synthesizer that can be used with it is one of the best around. It has one of the finest software libraries on the market; over 1,400 software packages are currently available, most of them of professional or near-professional quality. Many of these are offered as solid-state, plug-in cartridges—an important point to consider if you don't like sitting around waiting for cassettes to load, and if your home computer budget doesn't yet include the price of a disk drive.

Home management programs available for the computer include financial and budget-management software packages; programs designed to help keep household records; tax, investment and real estate management software; and the TI Writer, one of the best word processing programs for home computers on the market. There's also a mailing-list program, a checkbook manager package, and a whole library of business-aid software. TI owners can even buy a 99/4A-compatible version of Microsoft's Multiplan program, one of the most advanced electronic spreadsheet programs around.

Educational programs for the TI-99/4A range from "learning-can-be-fun" titles for pre-schoolers to the famous PLATO learning series. The PLATO comprises a comprehensive learning series that includes courses in practically every subject taught in public school and extends from the first grade through the twelfth.

With a speech synthesizer you can add lifelike voices to some of the newest games in the 99/4A's software catalog as well as write programs with voice comments built right in.

For programmers and aspiring programmers, TI BASIC—a fairly powerful BASIC dialect—is built right into the system. An Extended TI BASIC package, which turns the language into an extremely versatile programming language, is also available.

TI Logo, a useful and easy-to-learn language for creating computer graphics, is another language offered for the 99/4A. Other programmer's aids include a Pascal compiler, A TI-FORTH package, and the TI Editor/ Assembler, one of the best and most powerful machine language assemblers you can buy.

And now the bad news. Because TI isn't crazy about other companies writing and selling software for its computers, the lineup of games available for the unit is somewhat limited. Only about 50 are listed in the latest 99/4A software catalog, and few—if any—have titles that could be considered household words. And that's a pity, considering the outstanding color, graphics and sound capabilities of the TI-99/4A.

Another complaint some people have concerns the size of the keyboard. The 4A does have nice, dish-topped, full-stroke typewriter keys, just like a professional computer. They feel comfortable, have nice action, and work just fine. There just aren't enough of them. The 99/4A has only 48 keys—compared with 57 keys on the Atari 800, 66 keys on both the VIC-20 and the Commodore 64, and 53 keys on the TRS-80 Color Computer. And that has made a lot of doubling up of key functions necessary on the 99/4A.

The 99/4A's question mark is on the "I" key, for example—and to type a question mark, you have to hold down a special "function" key and hit the "I" key at the same time. To type a single quote mark, you have to hit Function-O, and to type double quotes you must hit Function-P. To make matters worse, the function key is on the right-hand side of the keyboard—the same side as the I, the O and the P. And that makes typing a question mark or a quote mark a two-hand operation.

Game Time

Even though there aren't as many games for the 99/4A as there are for some computers, most of those that are available are quite good.

TI's **Munchman**, for example, is an addictive Pac-Man lookalike. **Parsec**, another popular 99/4A title, is a fast-moving space game with built-in speech synthesis. To hear the speech, of course, you need a voice synthesizer module.

In **Munchman**, you play the part of a little Pac-Man-like chomping head, and your adversaries are four spiral-shaped creatures that come swirling out of boxes and chase you around a maze. As you move through the maze, you leave a trail of dots.

There's a TI logo—a flashing map of Texas—in each corner of the maze. Pass over a logo, and you can send your pursuers back to the cells they came from—but only temporarily. And if you haven't passed over a logo lately, they can devour you.

The object of **Munchman** is to cover

every inch of the maze, leaving a solid trail of dots behind. If you can do that, you'll be rewarded—with another maze.

Parsec is a cross between Defender and Asteroids—but with better graphics than either of those games, and with speech-synthesizer sound as well. Your mission in **Parsec** is to battle your way through waves of invading enemy spaceships, make it through a network of refueling tunnels, and then through a belt of asteroids.

There are six different kinds of enemy ships in **Parsec**—plus asteroids and killer satellites—and if you have a voice synthesizer, there are vocal commands.

Other popular game titles for the 99/4A include **Tombstone City: 21st Century**—set in a ghost town inhabited by cannibalistic "Morgs"— and **TI Invaders**, an excellent Space Invaders-like game. TI also has an entertaining fantasy game called **Tunnels of Doom**. And, under a special agreement with Adventure International, the company also offers 11 adventure games created by Scott Adams: **Adventureland, Pirate Adventure, Mission Impossible, Voodoo Castle, The Count, Strange Odyssey, Mystery Fun House, Pyramid of Doom, Ghost Town, Savage Island** (Parts I and II), and The Golden Voyage. The 99/4A game catalog also includes a good selection of computerized card and board games, plus a few sports games and more arcade-style titles.

How It Works

To play a game on the 99/4A, or to run any program cartridge, for that matter, all you have to do is slip the cartridge into a slot to the right of the computer's keyboard and turn the computer on. The 99/4A's power switch, incidentally, is on the bottom panel of the computer, just to the right of the keyboard. When the power is on, a red light glows just above the switch, on the front panel of the computer.

When the power goes on, a title screen appears on the monitor or TV set to which the computer is connected. There's a TI logo in the middle of the screen, and there are also two color-test bars.

As soon as a key—any key—is pressed, a second title screen comes into view. This screen also bears a TI logo, and under that there's a menu. If there's no cartridge in the computer, the menu gives you just one choice: to type in a "1" to run TI BASIC. If you hit another key, all you'll get is an angry beep.

If you have a cartridge in the computer when the second title screen appears, the name of the cartridge also appears on the menu, and you can type either a "1" for TI BASIC or "2" to run the cartridge.

If you decide to run TI BASIC, the screen clears and a "TI BASIC READY" message appears in black letters against a light-blue background—the standard colors of the screen display. Two screen lines down from the message there's a " " symbol, and next to that there's a flashing black cursor that means the computer's ready when you are.

The screen display is 29 columns (typed characters) wide and 24 rows (lines of characters) high. The computer has a high-resolution graphics mode in which it can generate 16 color graphics

on a grid 256 pixel (picture elements) wide and 192 pixels high.

A special graphics chip built into the 99/4A—the TMS-9918A—provides program designers with many sophisticated graphics techniques, including the use of "sprites." Sprites are figures that can be moved smoothly over the screen without affecting backgrounds or character-generated graphics. They are often used in arcade-style computer games, and can also be used in many other kinds of programming applications.

TI-99/4A programmers can also create special character sets—foreign-language alphabets, for example, and even sets of special graphics symbols. The ability to generate new character sets is built into TI BASIC. But many other useful graphics techniques—such as using sprites—are not available in the BASIC package built into the 99/4A. Capabilities for using sprites, PLOT commands and many other useful programming techniques are included, however, in TI's Extended BASIC software package.

Programming the 99/4A

To help you start programming in TI BASIC, Texas Instruments has two well-written, easy-to-understand instruction books — a 144-page manual called *Beginner's BASIC*, and a 99/4A *User's Reference Guide*.

The *Beginner's BASIC* book is packed with useful information, along with examples of short programs. The first thing you learn in Chapter 1 is how to make your computer print "Hi there!" on your video screen. Subsequent chapters cover simple and more advanced programming, and deal with topics including graphics, sound, games, and mathematical operations.

The *User's Reference Guide* is also a useful volume, and it's organized nicely, too. At least one page is devoted to each command in TI BASIC. The commands are listed alphabetically, and each command appears as a large one-word heading at the top of a page. Under each command, there's a comprehensive explanation of how the command works, and examples are given to illustrate its functions.

In the back of the reference guide, there's a collection of sample programs that can be typed into the computer and then run, and are useful as well as instructive.

What Next? Quite A Bit

As pointed out previously, the TI-99/4A is a 16-bit computer. To understand what that means, it's helpful to have an understanding of what a 16-bit computer is.

As you probably know, computers perform their calculations using binary numbers — numbers that can be expressed as strings of on-and-off signals, or as ones and zeros. And each digit in a binary number—whether it's a one or a zero—is known as a bit.

Now an 8-bit computer is a computer that can perform calculations on numbers up to eight bits long. And the biggest 8-bit number there is is 11111111. That, expressed as a decimal number, is the number 255. And it's the largest number that an 8-bit computer can handle at one time.

To perform calculations on larger

(Continued on page 80)

Youth Beat

Home Carts That Kid Around

By Rawson Stovall

At the 1983 winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, a new trend for home video was introduced—"Kiddie Games." Activision, Atari and Imagic are just a few of the many companies with plans to market home video games designed especially for children under the age of nine.

At the show Atari announced it had entered into a number of different licensing agreements, including one with Children's Television Workshop, creators of the Sesame Street characters; Walt Disney; Henson Associates, makers of the famous Muppets—Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy; and one with Charles Schulz, author of the well-known Peanuts comic strip.

Activision displayed a game designed by a new member of its team, Mike Lorenzen, who was responsible for Oink!. Meanwhile, Dennis Koble, a senior game designer at Imagic, was showing off his latest creation—Shootin' Gallery. This was Koble's third game for Imagic, his others being Trick Shot and Atlantis.

Before giving the reviews of three of these kiddie games, let me explain my rating system (it's very similar to grades in school).

Report Card*

A excellent, perfect
B great, above average
C good, average
D poor, below average
E failed dud!

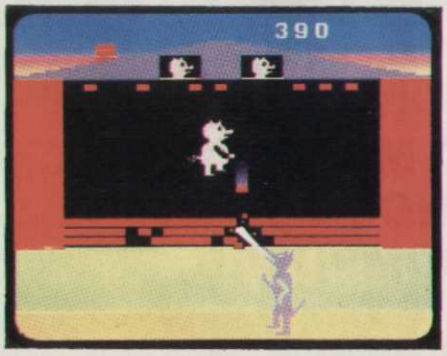
**from the 3's rs (Rawson's Reliable Rating)*

* * *

The story line in Activision's **Oink!**, designed for the Atari 2600, goes like this: these three little pigs have a big problem—their least favorite visitor, the wolf, has just come calling. "Little pig, little pig, let me come in!" says the wolf.

"Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin," squeals the pig.

It's a courageous answer but one that makes the wolf angry. "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." For a more detailed story line, read the *Three Little Pigs*! For the action, play Oink where the wolf runs around the bottom of the screen blowing his stinky breath toward a wall of straw, wood or bricks, slowly knocking them off one by one, similar to Breakout.



The pig, however, has a defense. If he can plug up the holes the evil wolf makes, then the hole in the wall won't get big enough for the pig to fall through. As Activision says, "With three oinks and a growl, home remodeling has, at last, become a ball."

The thing I like best about Oink! is its story line. Activision has taken a favorite story with children and made it into a game. My five-year-old sister recognized the story from the game right away. And, by the way, she does have fun playing Oink!

Report Card for Oink!

Game Play	C
Originality	A
Sound	C
Graphics	B
Overall rating	B

Type of Game: Kiddie/Action
Interest Level: under age 10

* * *

Although the cartridge box is labeled "Ideal for ages 9 and under," I've noticed my mom and other adults playing this game. Imagic's **Shootin' Gallery**, designed for the Atari 2600 and also Mattel's Intellivision, is a cart somewhat like Coleco's Carnival.

Both games present a day at a carnival shooting gallery with players having a gun at the bottom of the screen which shoots upward toward different targets. In Shootin' Gallery there are many targets, including a clock, kangaroo, seal, penguin, squirrel, monkey, snail, rabbit, frog, gullywhomper, rat, gumdrop, elephant, and an inchworm.

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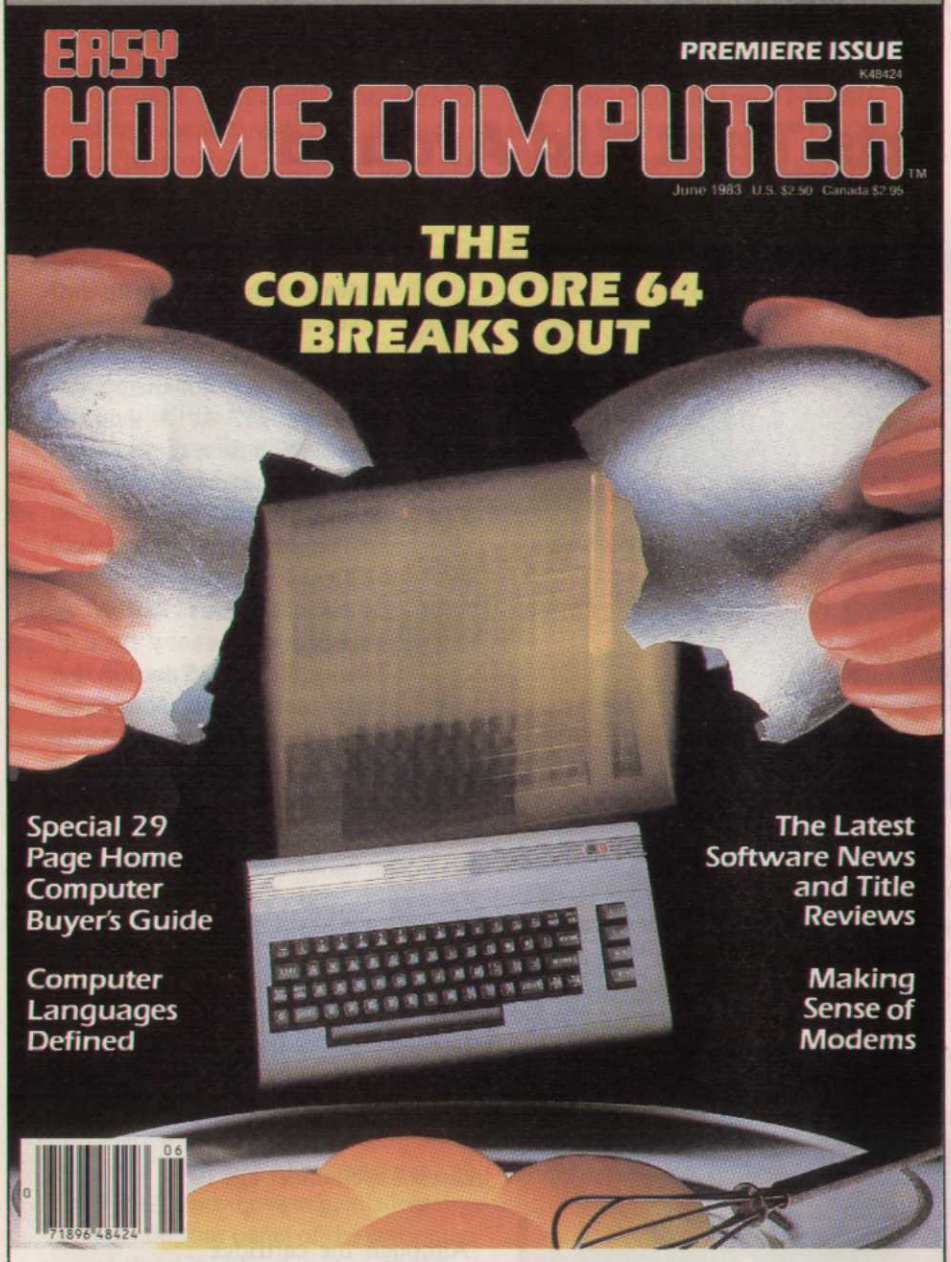

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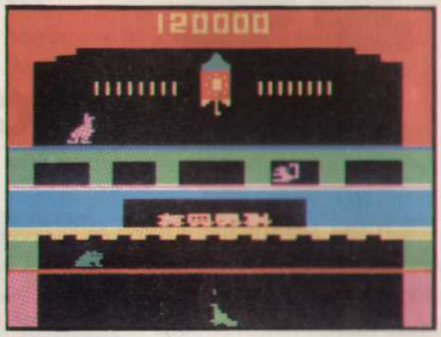
Another target is a train, which is actually four targets in one — an engine, a caboose, and two boxcars.

The only thing I dislike about the game is the scoring. I think it would take a very young child awhile to figure out which targets to hit to get the best possible score, but that doesn't make it any less fun for a small child to play.



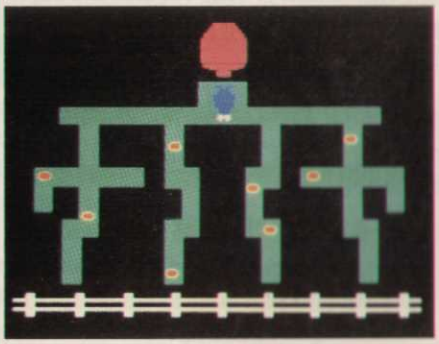
Report Card for
Shootin' Gallery

Game Play	C
Originality	C
Sound	A
Graphics	A
Overall rating	B
Type of game: Kiddie Game/ Shoot-'em-Up	
Interest Level: All Ages	

* * *

Like many Atari games, such as Yars' Revenge, Defender, Phoenix, and Vanguard, **Cookie Monster Munch** comes with a story book packed in with the game. The stories in the other games come in comic book form. The one in Cookie Monster Munch not only includes the instructions, but, in the back of the story/instruction book one finds games, puzzles, and pictures to color.

In Cookie Monster Munch, which requires a special keypad control especially designed for little hands, the player must guide Cookie Monster through an easy (well, to me) maze, help him pick up cookies and bring them to the cookie jar



(Continued on page 80)

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FLIPSIDE

(Continued from page 53)

some other baseball basics into the play with an array of stationary targets around the lower portion of the board which will spell out S-T-E-A-L and result in an out-hole bonus multiplier of 2X and 3X. Each run you score is 'worth' 5,000 points, which is then multiplied by the valued you've earned. Finish off this letter sequence a third time and there's an additional 50,000 points to be gained.

There's no discounting the balance of the Grand Slam layout and the fact that it's not too difficult a game to figure out. However, the design is also self-limiting. The long right side shot up through the spinner will only get you to the thumper bumper area, and even the left side poses its own problems of access. In addition, the five swinging targets in the middle tend to make the game a divided situation with the need being only to hit them hard enough to 'flip' them over. And once they are hit, you have nothing but open space to hit through.

There are some good reverses from the bottom flippers as well as full access from the left or right, but the redundancy of shot selections can become boring after awhile. Even the proximity of the main targets doesn't make this a giveaway since there's the need for precision shooting if you want to maximize potential scoring values. And even here Bally probably didn't envision a high-scoring game, since Grand Slam has only six digit scoring with a million light indicator (similar to what Game Plan's Sharpshooter featured way back when in pinball's once golden days).

To this reviewer there is, admittedly, a sense of disappointment with Grand Slam. Accepting the notion that the remaining companies are trying to bring out basic games that will generate some interest from non-flipper aces is one thing, but recycling features from a recent effort isn't the answer. More thought has to be given in bringing a more dimensional design to life where there's nuances for the more skilled player to tackle. Unfortunately, Grand Slam may be good for a couple of quarters, but after that it's a matter of good hit and no field. ▲

HARD SELL

(Continued from page 76)

numbers, an 8-bit computer has to break them down into 8-bit chunks, perform the requested calculation on each 8-bit number, and then add the results together. And if a result of a calculation is more than 8 bits long, then the result has to be stored in more than one memory location.

Now the plot thickens. When you put a letter or a number into a computer's memory, the computer has to have some way of knowing where the character is stored. So the computer assigns each character in its memory a number called an address. And every address in an 8-bit computer has a 16-bit, or two-byte, address.

The largest 16-bit number there is is 11111111 11111111. In decimal notation, that's 65,535, a number is often referred to 64K. (Not 65K, incidentally, because in binary-based computer math, one "K" equals 1,024—or 4 times 256 — not an even 1,000. And 64 times 2,024 equals 65,353, or 64K).

If you understand all of that, you now know why most top-of-the-line personal computers introduced over the past year or so are 64K models. Some (the Apple IIe, for example) are advertised as being expandable to 128K, but they really aren't 128K computers; they're actually 8-bit, 64K computers with external memory banks that can be loaded into RAM using a fancy programming trick called bank-switching.

Since the TI-99/4A is a 16-bit computer, it uses 32-bit addresses. So it doesn't need any tricks to boost its RAM capacity to well beyond 64K. And it works faster than an 8-bit computer, too. When you buy a 99/4A, take it home and plug it in, it's a 16K machine. But by adding two memory expansion modules, you can increase its RAM capacity — without any tricks — to 72K. And if the hardware designers at TI wanted to, they could undoubtedly increase the 99-4/A's memory capabilities even more.

But they probably won't bother. After all, with a 16-bit chip and up to 72K of RAM, the 99/4A is easily the most powerful home computer market right now. And that, in my opinion, is 99/4A-OK. ▲

YOUTH BEAT

(continued from page 78)

(teaches direction). Once all the cookies in the maze have been brought to the cookie jar, the screen changes. Cookie Monster is now inside the jar eating the cookies one by one. A large number at the bottom of the screen shows how many cookies this blue fuzzy creature has eaten (teaches counting).

Cookie Monster Munch is one of the best educational games I've played because it's actually fun to play. Even adults will find it amusing and parents and grandparents will want to put this one on their shopping list.

Report Card for
Cookie Monster Munch

Game Play	B
Originality	A
Graphics	A
Sound	A
Overall Rating	A

Type: Kiddie Maze/Educational
Interest Level: under 6; amusing for other ages

* * *

From pong games to space games to Pac-Man to kiddie games—no one knows for sure what the next trend will be, since there is a universe of possibilities. In the meantime, have some fun with these three kiddie games.

Rawson Stovall is an 11 year old from Abilene, TX who writes a weekly newspaper column, "The Vid Kid," on video games. The column is syndicated by Universal Press Syndicate. ▲

WE WANT YOU!

To put your joystick down long enough to fill out this questionnaire. Tell us what you like and don't like in the arcades, at home and about this magazine. Then let her rip (or photocopy it) and send it to us pronto at this address: *VIDEO GAMES* Magazine, 350 Fifth Ave., Suite 6204, New York, New York 10118.

Name: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Sex: Male: _____ Female: _____ Age: _____

Family Income: Under $14,000 _____ $14-21,000 _____ $21-39,999 _____ Over $40,000 _____

Education: Elementary School _____ High School _____ College _____ Master's _____ PhD _____

Occupation (if none, list parents'): _____

Favorite Department in this issue: _____

Favorite Feature article: _____ Favorite Blip: _____

What I'd like to see less of: _____

What I'd like to read more about: _____

How does this issue of *VIDEO GAMES* compare to previous ones?

The same _____ Even better _____ Best so far _____ Never mind _____

Why? _____

Other than *VIDEO GAMES* which magazines do you read? _____

Hobbies: _____

GAMER SECTION

How much money do you spend on video games per week? _____

Favorite new game: arcade _____ home _____

Biggest disappointment: arcade _____ home _____

Most challenging game: arcade _____ home _____

All-time favorite game: arcade _____ home _____

Favorite sequel game: _____

What home system do you own? _____

How long have you owned it? _____

How many hours per week do you play? _____

If you would get another system, which would it be? _____

How many video games do you buy each month? _____

How many video games do you own? _____

Do home and arcade game ads in *VIDEO GAMES* influence your purchases and selections? _____

What influences you in buying a video game? _____

Magazine or newspaper ads _____ Radio _____ Television _____ Word of Mouth _____ Other: _____

Does reading an article in *VIDEO GAMES* influence your video game purchases? _____

How did you get this issue? subscription _____ newsstand _____

You've just been hired by Big Name Games Company as senior games designer. Describe your first project: _____

_____

_____

_____

What do you think of Flip Side? _____

STATS

The Top 10 Home Games

May 28	May 14	Weeks on Chart	
1	1	9	Centipede (Atari)
2	2	13	Ms. Pac-Man (Atari)
3	4	35	Pitfall (Activision)
4	3	19	River Raid (Activision)
5	7	37	Frogger (Parker Bros.)
6	5	11	Donkey Kong Jr. (Coleco)
7	8	37	Donkey Kong (Coleco)
8	6	13	Phoenix (Atari)
9	9	37	Pac-Man (Atari)
10	10	19	Vanguard (Atari)

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The Top Arcade Games

June 15, 1983	Percentage
1. Pole Position (Atari)	100
*2. Time Pilot (Centuri)	68.5
*3. Millipede (Atari)	66.6
4. Q*bert (Gottlieb)	65.1
*5. Frontline (Taito)	64.1
*6. Baby Pac-Man (Bally)	63.0
7. Joust (Williams)	60.7
8. Ms. Pac-Man (Bally)	59.4

*Based on less than a 50% response rate.
Provisionally rated

1. Mappy (Bally)	80.8
2. Star Trek (Sega)	72.8
3. Sinistar (Williams)	72.5
4. Xevious (Atari)	69.9
5. Zoo Keeper (Taito)	65.3
6. Food Fight (Atari)	63.9

Response rate is between 10% to 25%.

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These are the top earning arcade games according to a poll of operators. Those with asterisks indicate operator responses were between 25-50 percent. The percentages are based on the top arcade game.

High Scorers

(effective May 18th)

Baby Pac-Man	6,685,130	Richard Sattilaro, Edison, N.J.
Bagman	2,000,000	Mark Robichek, Sunnyvale, Calif.
Buck Rogers	313,330	Bruce Borsato, Trail, B.C., Canada
Bump N' Jump	232,492	Mike Gaffin, San Jose, Calif.
Congo Bongo	183,420	Steve Harris, Kansas City, Mo.
Defender	76,377,300	Bert Jennings, Durham, N.C.
Dig Dug	4,129,600	Ken Arthur, Blackburg, Va.
Donkey Kong Jr.	957,300	Bill Mitchell, Ottumwa, Iowa
Food Fight	3,736,700	Perry Rodgers, San Luis, Calif.
Frenzy	4,789,909	Mike Mann, Oak Park Hts., Minn.
Frontline	278,500	Bob Tomasevich, Burbank, Ill.
Gorf	2,220,000	Jason Smith, Midland, Tx.
Gravitar	4,722,200	Raymond Muller, Boulder, Colo.
Joust (new Chip)	70,013,950	Connel McCrohan, Dallas, Tx.
Journey	123,400	Frank Dean, Villa Park, Ill.
Lost Tomb (single play)	1,129,860	David Maines, Ottumwa, Iowa
Mappy	155,840	David Dean, Riverside, Calif.
Millipede	1,720,392	Eric Ginner, Milpitas, Calif.
Monster Bash	448,400	Bob Lynch, Kinosha, Wis.
Moon Patrol (7 Cars)	1,214,600	Mark Robichek, Sunnyvale, Calif.
Mr. Do	771,850	Desiree McCroney, Sunnyvale, Calif.
Ms. Pac-Man	397,950	Kevin Fischer, Silver Springs, Md.
Munch Mobile	1,161,480	James Turner, San Diego, Calif.
Nibbler	130,960,480	Allen Rager, Millington, Tenn.
Pole Position	66,460	Mike Klug, San Jose, Calif.
Popeye	619,830	Steve Harris, Kansas City, Mo.
Q*bert	17,899,325	Ben Gold, Dallas, Tx.
Robotron	287,211,050	Michael Dullard, Des Moines, Iowa
Satan's Hollow	8,692,035	Michael Ward, Madison, Wis.
Sinistar	327,655	Dean McMannis, San Jose, Calif.
Speak Easy	21,396,050	Steve Stanger, Caledonia, Mich.
Star Trek	1,044,750	Robert Burtt, Fairfax, Va.
Super Pac-Man	588,430	John Azzis, Santa Monica, Calif.
Super Zaxxon	151,100	Gary Hatt, Upland, Calif.
Time Pilot	2,006,200	Tim Foland, Woodlands, Tx.
Wacko	1,608,100	Steve Harris, Kansas City, Mo.
Xevious	2,737,420	Tim Williams, Moscow, Idaho
Zoo Keeper	3,800,100	Eric Ginner, Sunnyvale, Calif.

Our thanks to Walter Day Jr., of Twin Galaxies International Scoreboard, 226 East Main St., Ottumwa, Iowa 52501, for providing us with these latest scores. Locations given are where the scores were recorded.

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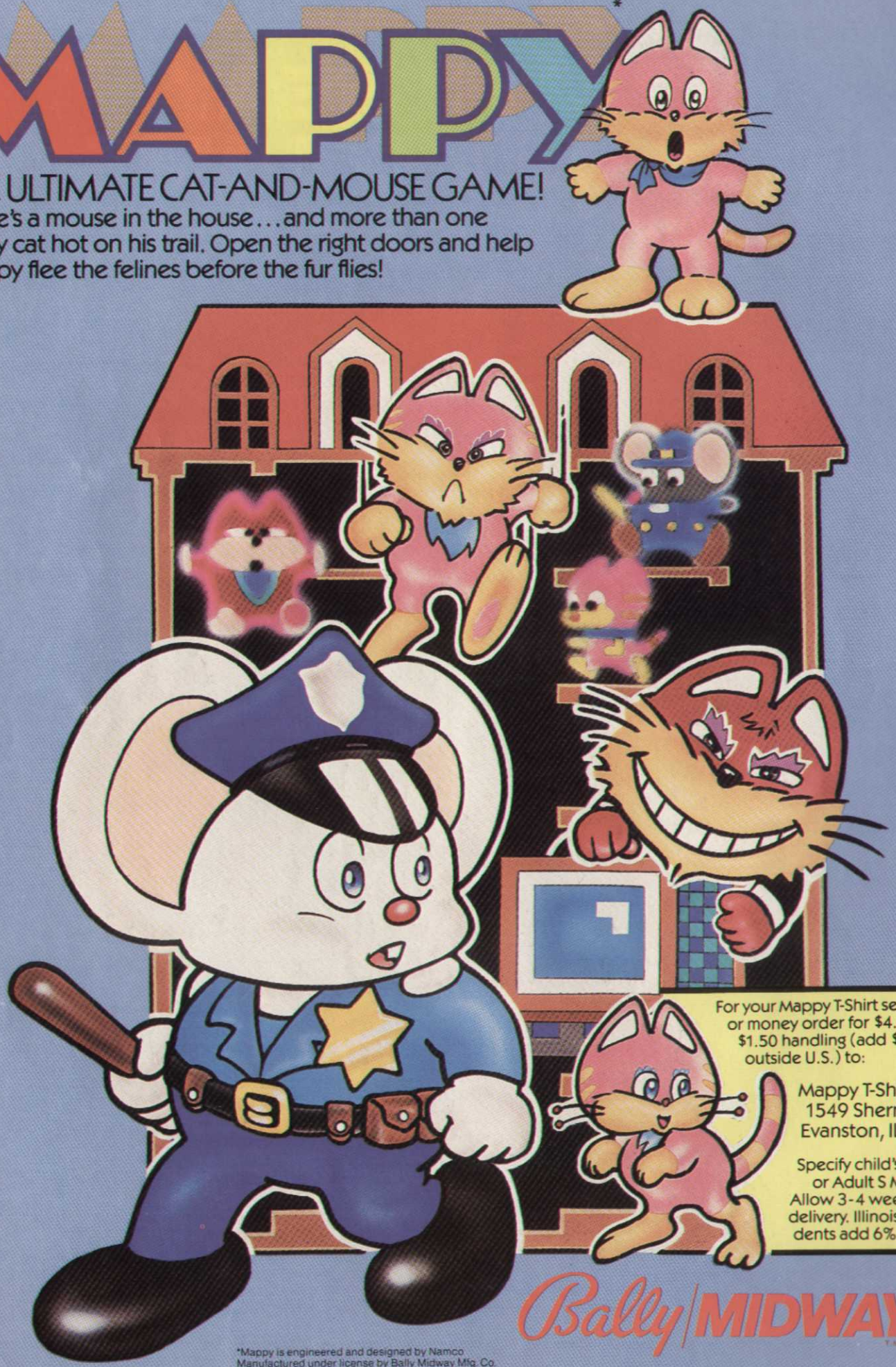

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